SERMONS

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR 1894

MONDAY CLUB

NINETEENTH SERIES

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Sermons on the international
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SERMONS

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR 1894

BY THE MONDAY CLUB

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CONTENTS.

FIRST QUARTER.

PAGE

January 7.

1. THE FIRST ADAM. Genesis 1 : 26–31 ; 2 : 1–3 9
Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.

January 14.

2. ADAM'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE. Genesis 3 : 1–15 17
Rev. William H. Davis.

January 21.

3. CAIN AND ABEL. Genesis 4 : 3–13 24
Rev. Charles M. Southgate.

January 28.

4. GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH. Genesis 9 : 8–17 31
Rev. David O. Mears, D.D.

February 4.

5. BEGINNING OF THE HEBREW NATION. Genesis 12 : 1–9 . . 39
Rev. Edward N. Packard, D.D.

February 11.

6. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. Genesis 17 : 1–9 . . . 48
Rev. S. Lewis B. Speare.

February 18.

7. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON SODOM. Genesis 18 : 22–33 57
Rev. Edward Sampson Tead.

February 25.

8. TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH. Genesis 22 : 1–13 65
Rev. George M. Boynton, D.D.

March 4.
9. SELLING THE BIRTHRIGHT. Genesis 25:27–34 72
Rev. Charles E. Jefferson.

March 11.
10. JACOB AT BETH-EL. Genesis 28:10–22 80
Rev. Edward Beecher Mason, D.D.

March 18.
11. WINE A MOCKER. Proverbs 20:1–7 89
Rev. Charles A. Dickinson.

March 25.
12. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. Mark 16:1–8 97
Rev. John E. Tuttle, D.D.

SECOND QUARTER.

April 1.
1. JACOB'S PREVAILING PRAYER. Genesis 32:9–12 105
Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.

April 8.
2. DISCORD IN JACOB'S FAMILY. Genesis 37:1–11 114
Rev. DeWitt S. Clark, D.D.

April 15.
3. JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT. Genesis 37:23–36 121
Rev. Charles M. Southgate.

April 22.
4. JOSEPH RULER IN EGYPT. Genesis 41:38–48 128
Rev. Justin E. Twitchell, D.D.

April 29.
5. JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BRETHREN. Genesis 45:1–15 . . 138
Rev. William R. Campbell.

May 6.
6. JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS. Genesis 50:14–26 146
Rev. Addison P. Foster, D.D.

May 13.
7. ISRAEL IN EGYPT. Exodus 1 : 1–14 154
Rev. Edward Sampson Tead.

May 20.
8. THE CHILDHOOD OF MOSES. Exodus 2 : 1–10 162
Rev. Albert E. Dunning, D.D.

May 27.
9. MOSES SENT AS A DELIVERER. Exodus 3 : 10–20 . . . 170
Rev. Charles E. Jefferson.

June 3.
10. THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED. Exodus 12 : 1–14 178
Rev. George R. Leavitt, D.D.

June 10.
11. PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA. Exodus 14 : 19–29 185
Rev. Nehemiah Boynton.

June 17.
12. THE ANOINTED KING. Psalm 2 : 1–12 194
Rev. Edward Beecher Mason, D.D.

THIRD QUARTER.

July 1.
1. THE BIRTH OF JESUS. Luke 2 : 1–16 202
Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.

July 8.
2. PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE. Luke 2 : 25–38 211
Rev. DeWitt S. Clark, D.D.

July 15.
3. THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN. Matthew 2 : 1–12 . . . 219
Rev. G. Frederick Wright, D.D.

July 22.
4. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Matthew 2 : 13–23 227
Rev. David O. Mears, D.D.

July 29.
5. THE YOUTH OF JESUS. Luke 2: 40–52 235
Rev. William R. Campbell.

August 5.
6. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS. Mark 1: 1–11 242
Rev. S. Lewis B. Speare.

August 12.
7. CHRIST'S TEMPTATION. Matthew 4: 1–11 251
Rev. Willard G. Sperry, D.D.

August 19.
8. FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS. John 1: 35–49 260
Rev. William R. Campbell.

August 26.
9. FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS. John 2: 1–11 268
Rev. Charles E. Jefferson.

September 2.
10. JESUS CLEANSING THE TEMPLE. John 2: 13–25 276
Rev. Theodore J. Holmes.

September 9.
11. JESUS AND NICODEMUS. John 3: 1–16 284
Rev. Charles A. Dickinson.

September 16.
12. JESUS AT JACOB'S WELL. John 4: 9–26 290
Rev. John E. Tuttle, D.D.

September 23.
13. DANIEL'S ABSTINENCE. Daniel 1: 8–20 298
Rev. William R. Campbell.

FOURTH QUARTER.

October 7.
1. JESUS AT NAZARETH. Luke 4: 16–30 307
Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.

October 14.
2. THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES. Luke 5: 1–11 316
Rev. DeWitt S. Clark, D.D.

October 21.
3. A SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM. Mark 1: 21–34 325
Rev. G. Frederick Wright, D.D.

October 28.
4. A PARALYTIC HEALED. Mark 2: 1–12 333
Rev. Justin E. Twitchell, D.D.

November 4.
5. JESUS LORD OF THE SABBATH. Mark 2: 23–28; 3: 1–5 . . 344
Rev. Edward N. Packard, D.D.

November 11.
6. THE TWELVE CHOSEN. Mark 3: 6–19 351
Rev. Addison P. Foster, D.D.

November 18.
7. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. Luke 6: 20–31 360
Rev. Edward Sampson Tead.

November 25.
8. OPPOSITION TO CHRIST. Mark 3: 22–35 369
Rev. George M. Boynton, D.D.

December 2.
9. CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO JOHN. Luke 7: 24–35 376
Professor A. H. Currier, D.D.

December 9.
10. CHRIST TEACHING BY PARABLES. Luke 8: 4–15 385
Rev. Theodore J. Holmes.

December 16.
11. THE TWELVE SENT FORTH. Matthew 10: 5–16 392
Rev. Nehemiah Boynton.

December 23.
12. THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Isaiah 9: 2–7 401
Rev. John E. Tuttle, D.D.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS.

Rev. GEORGE M. BOYNTON, D.D. .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. NEHEMIAH BOYNTON . . .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. WILLIAM R. CAMPBELL . .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. DeWITT S. CLARK, D.D. .	Salem, Mass.
Prof. A. H. CURRIER, D.D. . . .	Oberlin, Ohio.
Rev. WILLIAM H. DAVIS, D.D. . .	Detroit, Mich.
Rev. CHARLES A. DICKINSON . .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. ALBERT E. DUNNING, D.D. .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D. .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. WM. ELLIOT GRIFFIS, D.D. .	Ithaca, N. Y.
Rev. THEODORE J. HOLMES . . .	Newton Centre, Mass.
Rev. CHARLES E. JEFFERSON . .	Chelsea, Mass.
Rev. GEORGE R. LEAVITT, D.D. .	Cleveland, Ohio.
Rev. EDWARD B. MASON, D.D. . .	Brunswick, Me.
Rev. DAVID O. MEARS, D.D. . . .	Cleveland, Ohio.
Rev. EDWARD N. PACKARD, D.D. .	Syracuse, N. Y.
Rev. CHARLES M. SOUTHGATE .	Worcester, Mass.
Rev. S. LEWIS B. SPEARE . . .	Boston, Mass.
Rev. WILLARD G. SPERRY, D.D. .	Olivet, Mich.
Rev. EDWARD S. TEAD	Somerville, Mass.
Rev. JOHN E. TUTTLE, D.D. . . .	Amherst, Mass.
Rev. JUSTIN E. TWITCHELL, D.D. .	New Haven, Conn.
Rev. G. FREDERICK WRIGHT, D.D.	Oberlin, Ohio.

SERMONS.

FIRST QUARTER.

THE FIRST ADAM.

GENESIS 1 : 26–31; 2 : 1–3.

"*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*"

OUR Sunday-school lessons for 1894, the newest and latest year of the world, begin with the first and simplest account of the origin of man. We open at the story of creation. We study that wonderful, inspired preface to the heavenly Father's Book. As in all good and orderly architecture the portico and door are finished last : as in all true literature, and especially in history, the preface is the last completed work : so here, in order of time, the written form was not first, but in maturity of time.

God created, God educated, God trained man, until, in the fullness of the ages, his chosen people were given, through men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, the story of origins. Men learn about their babyhood and cradle when they grow up ; and so, when Israel, trained of God, was ready to receive it, then came, in simple but beautiful literary form, a form that will survive all "science," the story of creation. This form is poetic.

The first chapter of Genesis is a poem of exquisite beauty. It is a clear and simple revelation of God's way of working. It is not a cartoon set up before the weaver

of scholastic systems in the cloister. It was made for the children of God; for all those who believe that in this universe in which we dwell all things are ordered and sure. There is One who has made and One who will keep. He who created man in his image and likeness will in due time send forth the second Adam. He who in the beginning of history moved and ordered all things according to his will will not leave his creation, but will bring all things to consummation in Him to whom all history does look and will look.

In our own day, when the science of comparative religion enables us to place this matchless story of creation beside those which the various nations have received from their ancestors, we have an advantage which our forefathers, and even the patriarchs, did not have. The study of pagan theogony is a great aid to the faith of the Christian. The science of comparative religion was founded by Christians. It is distinctly a Christian science; and "it is so because it is the product of Christian civilization, and because it finds its impulse in that freedom of inquiry which Christianity fosters." It is the fruit of a very wide induction of facts. Investigation, discussion, and comparison of the various religions of the world are unknown among non-Christian people, save where they have been excited by the aggressiveness of Christian missions. The study of the systems of India which grew out of the soil of pantheism, of the Persian systems which grew out of dualism, of the Egyptian systems which grew out of polytheism serve only to show the superior truth and uniqueness of the revelation given in the book of Genesis.

We confess that to our own mind the study of the Japanese theory of creation served under God as a great blessing. The Japanese system, like so many others among the nations, roots itself in the bare doctrine of

evolution ; matter exists before mind, and the gods spring up out of the warm muck and gradually become conscious. Mind is developed, and anon sex and dualism follow. Then gradually arise, by ordinary growth, the various objects and forces which make up the creation. In other words, the Japanese system ignores the mystery, tries to solve it by what is visible to the eye, without really reaching the first cause, and ignores also a supreme Creator.

How different from all these systems, which have risen like clouds, more or less colored or prismatic from the human imagination, is the Christian system ! The first line in Genesis shatters forever all those notions based on pantheism or on atheistic evolution. Mind was before matter : "In the beginning, God." On this root-idea the whole thoughts and history in the Bible proceed. First of all there is a boundary line between God and his creation. God is first, and what is made follows. He is, and they become. He created the heaven and the earth. Establish first of all the right boundary lines, and then there is order ; remove the primal line of demarcation, and all other boundaries are removed as by a flood, and a great deluge of confusion covers the landmarks. In a country where men thus think, because they know of matter before they know of mind, and of the creation before they know of God, we have arrested mental development, retrograde or stationary civilization, and people who before their conquerors become as clay to the potter.

The mind of man in India, having lost the distinction between God and his creation, runs wildly into a luxuriant and tangled jungle of religions. Before the conqueror, Greek, Mongol, or British, he yields, unable to resist.

In the Genesis story God brings forth the world and all that is therein ; and after stocking the great deeps of space with their swimming orbs of light, fills the sea with

"moving creatures" innumerable. He makes the air pulse with fowl and song. He touches the earth and it brings forth the grander forms of life. In that harmonious progression from the most humble to the most noble forms of animal life he proceeds, and seeing his work pronounces it good. Yet amid all the abundance of moving but inanimate bodies, all the luxuriance of animate life, all the wonders of nerve and bone, muscle and varied form which have been organized out of water and earth, there is none to bear the divine image and likeness.

Already, in the creation, God has put within the lower brutes that which is a prophecy of something still greater to come. The forms of life are wonderful and varied, and in them there is passion and feeling, there is even care for offspring, there is something like love; the instincts of maternity and paternity are implanted; and all these by their very progress, by the development from simple ideals, show types which are to be fulfilled in a grander antitype.

Now, as introduction to the story of the crowning of all God's previous work by the creation of man, the language changes. Hitherto the Word has been to the nature already brought into being; the edicts have been imperative; they have been in the third person; the constant formula in each strophe of the poem has been in the third person — "Let there be." Six times has the fiat gone forth — Let light, firmament, waters, lights, waters bring forth, earth bring forth. Now, for the seventh and completing creation, the literary formula suggests more personal interest, even counsel.

The term is "Let *us* make man"; for now it is God and nature, the heavenly and the earthly, associating together. The nature which God has ordained is addressed as in council and coöperation. God, directly and sovereignly, nature mediately and obediently, through the

divine Word, unite. Through the earth shall come forth his bodily physical form ; through the other shall be given his diviner life and image. Hitherto the language has been "Let . . . bring forth" ; but in respect to man the word of the counsel is "Let us make man."

Thus speaking, Elohim would take the earth and form it into that physical image to which certain beasts are so closely allied that man does not even stand, according to the classification of students, in a species by himself. For other creatures which God made, and whose wonderful osseous, nervous, respiratory, and other systems he united in single bodies, share with man the glory of being in the same species in zoölogy or the science of lower life. Man, physical, is only a genus, but man wholly complete is something which no other earthly creature, however superior in strength, fleetness, covering, fineness of sense, can approach for a moment ; for the dividing line between the *genus homo* and all subordinate life is drawn in these words : "And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion." Yes, despite the undeniable fact that by his physical equipment alone man is distinctly the inferior of the creatures able to navigate the depths of the sea, live and breathe in its abyss ; of creatures able to soar and fly and see in the deeps of air ; of those which in tropic climes, in Arctic snows, in the temperate zones are even better fitted for the battle of life, and are in greater harmony with their environment, — the image-bearer of God has yet dominion over them all. God gave man power, such power as none of the beasts, or all of them together, have, or can possess.

Still further, the inspired poet shatters with one stroke of his pen all those elaborate systems of dualism which have always made man the despot and woman nothing but his slave and toy. How many are the forms of this

dualistic philosophy which men have evolved! When the children of Israel came into Canaan they found it in its vilest and most obscene form. In later times, when Babylon went down under the sword and bow of Cyrus, it was a tremendous system, and a philosophy influencing millions of men. Under Zoroaster's teachings the power of evil was exaggerated; it was made equal to God; the whole universe, according to this philosopher, was divided up between Ormuzd and Ahriman, Light and Darkness; Good and Evil were constantly at war, with a possibility, and even probability, that Darkness would conquer the Light, Evil overcome the Good. Even to-day throughout Asia this old dualism holds its own; sways the minds of millions; keeps woman a slave, or a toy; blurs all the distinction between right and wrong, guilt and righteousness. Even into Christian thought it sometimes thrusts its great cloven shadow.

Yet still to-day, as in the ancient time, God's Word shatters to pieces the Babel-like edifice of human imaginations. Isaiah speaks the timely word, the fresh message for the age and the ages. In the face of that dualism which overshadowed the world, because it seemed backed and reinforced by a great military monarchy, the prophet, in the name of Jehovah, uttered this word: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Nothing can take place without the will of God. There is no evil that is a god. Even what men call evil is in his harness, and held by his hand. So here in the earlier time the Word of God, as with a hammer, shattered the dualism which first cursed, and still curses, men by its poisonous shadow.

"And God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." And so woman shares with man the glory of image-bearer of the Divine, wherever to-day the Lord

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gives the word. Let us be thankful that to-day "great is the company" of the women who publish it. Yet whether the missionary be male or female this truth must be uttered: Woman, like man, bears God's likeness and image. It is not in sex; it is not in physical form; it is not in the understanding or memory; it is in that ability to know God and to appreciate him, and to enter into his thoughts and to think with him; still more is it to be partaker of the divine nature and to escape the lusts which are natural to the brute beasts which are in this world, and against which the image-bearer of Elohim must ever strive to escape. Holiness, in the sense of a divinely infused and special gift, such as comes to the soul renewed in Christ Jesus, can hardly be said to constitute the image in which this first nameless man participated. Was it not rather that innocence which in a child is so beautiful, and yet which is not holiness based upon the deliberate choice of the human will as moved by the direct influences of the Holy Spirit?

Next follows a command and word of God in which all science, art, mastery, and progress are wrapped up. In these words is the germ of all civilization. Man in this first description of him is nameless; he is a genus; but to him is given the mastery over all the forms of life; and he is bidden to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it. Nature is to be shaped, molded, harmonized, directed by man.

Food and nourishment are provided. God does not order his image-bearer to do anything which he is not competent and well able to do. He points him to the earth which is to bring forth his food. He thus ordains constant strength for his creature, bidding him start out on the long campaign, to begin the struggle for existence and the battle of life. He shows him where provision, food, and nurture are to be found.

Still more, God himself sets man an example. He who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust animated by his Spirit, knows that we must rest; and so, finishing his own glorious creation, he rests on the seventh day. He blesses and he hallows this day, and therein he gives the highest sanction for man's imitation of his Creator.

To our mind this narrative of the Elohist is sublimely simple, and preaches its own sermon. We refrain from all attempts to draw from this poetic picture and condensed history the logical doctrines which later minds and system-makers have framed. In these eight verses we have not man and woman named; we have not the later revelation of Jehovah's name; we have not here the picture of the forbidden tree; we have not here that wonderful narrative of the inbreathing of that breath of life by which man became a living soul; we have not here the geographical description of a geographical place — Eden; we have not here the accounts of the rivers and the precious gems and metals; we have not here the detailed story of the making of man's companion, or the narrative of the serpent or of the temptation and the fall and the beginning of the life in new consciousness, or the curse, or the promise of the second Adam, the Messiah.

We have attempted only to reset the old story, as given in the first chapter of Genesis, for the instruction of to-day. Yet, if we had but this story alone, would it not eloquently preach its own lessons? — God in council with his own works, making man, making him so as to bear the divine image, giving him power over all living creatures, ordering him to subdue the earth, providing for him his food, giving to him a day of rest, — one in seven, — making his wife also to be with him joint bearer of the divine image. And thus over all and in all and through all and unto all is God.

William Elliot Griffis.

ADAM'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE.

GENESIS 3: 1–15.

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."

THE book of Genesis is the book of beginnings, and its pioneer and panorama-like records of creation and the temptation of man are the earliest traditions of the race. The records are singularly simple and grand and carry in parabolic phrase the shadowy outlines of great universal facts which stretch away into prehistoric times and touch the very origins of life. These chronicles of a fall, a flood, and a babel of tongues are not to be judged, therefore, by any hard-and-fast rule of literalism or scientific criticism, but rather as the pictorial and Oriental way of stating these majestic world beliefs.

And those narrower questions of literal interpretation and physical details are not wisely raised, for the possibilities of a speech-making serpent or an actual tree of good and evil are not worth controversy in such poetic statements of truth. Surely it matters little whether evil used a serpent — the slimy type of subtle indirection — or Milton's toad or some fair bird of paradise to whisper his words of poison into the soul; for we know — A.D. 1893 — that the garb of evil suggestion is chameleon-like and its form protean — now an angel of light and now a will-o'-the-wisp from the swamp. Nor is it essential whether we hinge the trial of obedience upon a forbidden tree or the passage of a dooryard gate or a piece of silver, purposely left beside the till, so long as this simple test reveals the hidden choices of the will.

We tarry then this morning upon this oldest story of literature and life, not to ask the genesis of moral evil or why it was permitted in the world, for we have no answers to give. We stand all in the dark of a great mystery, saying only that sin is no accident, for such surprises are not sprung upon an omniscient God, nor is evil eternal, else there were two infinities. "It came knocking for admission and God's shoulder was not against the gate." We know not why, save that the grace of God might be writ larger in the world of men and the might of goodness become more real within our souls.

But we wait upon this threshold scene in the history of the race because it is the awful perennial tragedy of life. As we read it here perhaps we smile at this childish chronicle of Eden; but let us not forget that this deed of sin in a soul is not simply the shadowy record of a far-off time when two guilty lives fell from the joys of innocency into the miseries of shame, but rather the initial act of wrong which every life has perpetuated and every day and night renewed in the long calendar of the ages.

Yesterday, within a stone's cast from your door, ay, beneath the rooftree of your home, this scene of the garden was repeated, and the very chronicle of crime which the morning paper brought to your eyes was only a rescript of this old chapter of Genesis. The story is old, but, alas! new every morning and fresh every evening, like the ceaseless mercies of God; and the lessons of this scene are as timeless as temptation and as imperative as life. The sloping steps of evil-doing, whereby a chance and nebulous suggestion becomes crystallized into a deed of sin; the awful self-revelations of evil-doing whereby the eyes are opened and the soul trembles at the coming footsteps of God; and the inevitable penalty of wrong written upon the laws of nature and the conscience of man with a pen of iron, — these are the lessons of this

historic sin *plus* a twilight gleam of that historic redemption which flows around all sin as the waters surround the islands of the sea.

We watch, then, the processes of approach with which the tempter works the overthrow of a soul:—

I. *A question*, with the circumflex accent: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of all the trees of the garden?"—lifting with subtle insinuation the single exception in the divine purpose until the mind was fastened upon *it* more than upon all the generous bounty of the garden, a question which has the prick of poison in it like that with which Iago asks Othello about his wife, until a vague and shadowy sense of wrong is sown in the woman's soul.

Her very answer with its "exaggerated addition," "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," betrays how quick the doubt begins its work. For when we go beyond a "thus saith the Lord" and overstate a divine command, we are as much out of the straight path as when we understate it. And we note here with what perilous swiftness the soil of the soul becomes ripe for the seed of an out-and-out denial of God's word: "Ye shall not surely die"; and with it comes a challenge of the divine motives: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

So the curiosity to know the secret of the divine prohibition is mated to the ambition to be as gods, and as Eve looks the tree seems good for food, a delight to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Already the soul is surrendered to the senses before the hand reached forth and took the fruit thereof: for in the dalliance of the mind with evil the suggested doubt has become a cherished thought, and it has passed into a wish which ripens fast into a purpose and a deed. And such a deed!

> Earth felt the wound and Nature, from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
> That all was lost.

II. *The deed is passed on.* "And she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Sin carries a law of contagion by which the evil of one becomes the fall of another, until in the words of an English preacher "the floodgates are open: the tiny ripple of an illicit thought, ever swelling, deepening, broadening, has burst into an irresistible river — waters to swim in — a river that could not be passed over."

> 'T was but a little drop of sin
> We saw this morning enter in
> And lo! at eventide a world is drowned.
>
> — *From Farrar's "The Fall of Man."*

As we stand before this dual deed of sin by which the father and the mother of a race are branded in the mutual guilt of violated law, we recognize a vaster law of contagion whereby types and tendencies are handed on from generation to generation. With certain doctrines of generic and responsible participation in the sin of Adam we have little sympathy, and yet this law of heredity is so wide reaching that we are awed by the very mystery of it whenever we attempt to map the currents of appetite and passion which throb in the blood, or trace the possibilities of good and evil in coming lives, whose ancestors we are. The solemnity of life deepens within us as we center upon a single soul the converging lines of traits and tastes and tendencies which gather from we know not whence and radiate hence we know not where. The smile with which at first we may have read this story of a primeval fall fades away, and in its place a sense of its tremendous meaning begins to dawn upon us as we ponder the inheritance and the legacy of life.

III. *We note the penalties of this deed.* "The eyes of

them both were opened." Not the physical eyes alone, whereby the world of nature was changed until the very scenes of beauty and of bounty grew distasteful to the sight and palled upon the senses; for the temper of the soul gives color to the world about us — as witness the exuberant joy of a glad heart in flower and bird and sea and sky,

tho' the day be dark and dreary,

while to the man who carries in his soul the secret of a crime or a burden of remorse the very sunshine has a leaden look; he reads suspicion in the eyes of men and hears ominous sounds which others do not hear, until nature becomes a kind of whispering gallery of accusation and of judgment. The spirit within, and not the world without, makes the difference. So here, the eyes are opened, not only to a changed and desolated paradise, to a body naked and ashamed, but more to that sad vision of an outraged soul and the sound of "a still small voice" which stings.

The spell is broken, and conscience, the eye and ear of the soul, begins its work in the mind of man. This is the nature of evil — self-disclosure — a knowledge which comes to all of us at fearful cost. We take the forbidden fruit and *the eyes are opened;* we do the unlawful deed and the "damned spot" of passion or of blood, like that upon the hands of the guilty queen, we cannot wash from our sight; even in the dreams of the night we see it. Such is the price we pay for the knowledge of good and evil — the loss of innocence and a fallen soul.

Such knowledge makes cowards of us all. So here: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." This is the first edition of an experience with which we are all familiar — the cowardice

which conscience brings into life until we hide in shame and fear from the gentle call and step of God in the still and evening hour of his coming; and when he finds us — as he *always will* — how cravenly we shun the divine eye and parry the divine question, eager to criminate each other, the man laying the blame not only upon the woman, but worse, upon God who gave her to him, and she upon the serpent who beguiled her!

We raise no interrogation marks upon this story. We know the record is trustworthy, not because it is written in this old book, but because it has been rewritten in the life of every man and woman from that day to this. Its lessons are so plain and its warnings so thunderous that we need draw but lightly the bow and arrow of application upon ourselves.

No man can play, however carelessly or ignorantly at the first, with the divine prohibitions of life in appetites or in ambitions or in the social and business habits, without being led on through these same steps of weakening will to an overt deed of sin whereby the eyes will be opened, not only of the conscience within, but also of the world without, and that awful knowledge of good and evil — the knowledge of sin and shame and death — will be his forever.

No woman can look long or even askance upon a forbidden thought or an illicit love or a selfish purpose without endangering her purity and peace; for the outer currents of the whirling pool of sin begin far back and slowly but surely draw a halting soul to its fall. The fancy of adventure, inflamed by ambition, passes so easily to an unlawful desire, which leads on "to the sign manual of a deed," and ere we know it the vows of innocency are broken and the flash of the divine sword blinds our way to the tree of life, as, alas! how many have discovered when it was too late! Six thousand years lift their

monotonous levels of seedtime and harvest between that far deed and ours, but the tempter still lives and in multitudinous forms lays siege to the citadel of the soul, and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" is still true. We look in upon ourselves and out upon the wandering prodigals who once were innocent, and we see how the stairway of evil slopes down little by little, until by the very momentum of its own weight we are carried into callousness and bitter bondage. In the scars and penitential psalms of life we read the warning truth of this race history — "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." Hear it, I pray you, young and old!

Finally, we pause a moment more to hear the sovereign sentence of God upon this primeval sin as it falls upon beast and field, upon motherhood and man, in the long curse of enmity and sorrow, of toil and death, which trails its blight across the generations: a sentence whose very doom of darkness carries in it "the first gray streak of the dawn," which like a line of light threads this primal judgment whereby the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head — a gleam of grace and redemption which widens like the twilight of the morning into the sunrise of that full day when "as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. . . . that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So we face — even here upon the threshold — the mystery of the grace of God by which, "before the foundation of the world," the fall of man is matched and overmatched with an eternal atonement. In this hope we live and move and pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

William H. Davis.

CAIN AND ABEL.

GENESIS 4: 3–13.

"Not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother." — 1 John 3: 12.

THE opening chapters of Genesis have given poets, artists, and musicians inspiration for their greatest works, but God's word describes these first tragedies of mankind with utterest simplicity. Just outside Paradise, murder! Was there no outcry among the angels? no wailing minor as the morning stars sang together? The record has not an exclamation point, not even an adjective. Embellishment would disfigure a history so solemn. In earlier chapters we have looked upon a new-made world, bright with the Creator's smile. In it awake to consciousness beings made in the image of God, with the deep sense of God at hand, and all the glad earth theirs in trust. Next, the sweet companionship of wedded lives. Then the fatal fall, and the dim yet quickening promise of redemption.

The record advancing gives us in this lesson: —

I. *The development of family and social life.* Here is the world's loveliest picture, the earliest Madonna, perhaps the fairest, bending over her babe. In the rapture that feels him to be a divine gift, she names him Cain, "Gotten"; "I have gotten a man with Jehovah," as if she thought the promised Redeemer already given. But when the second child is in her arms, foreboding has displaced hope. This one is Abel, "Breath," vanishing vapor. Alas! poor Eve. Till this day your daughters prove how a mother's joy may become a mother's grief, delight measure distress. The beginnings of social and

industrial life are here. Life means work, and the two sons take different kinds of work. Division of labor is fundamental in the plan of the universe. Biology shows that life starts with the simple cell. Then cells multiply in groups; and as separate cells take up unlike functions, nutrition or reproduction or motion, so is developed all the wondrous variety of organisms on this teeming earth. Evolution is from the simple to the complex. The complicated mesh of industrial and commercial life is forecast when Cain becomes a tiller of the soil and Abel a keeper of sheep.

Worship also begins. To home and toil is joined the altar. It is not said that sacrifice was divinely ordained, but we can hardly think it an intuitive impulse of the natural soul. What could the man see in the slaying of an ignorant and innocent lamb that should make him stand better with a holy God? But the thought of substitution, once suggested, is instinctively grasped by the guilty conscience, and a progressive revelation leads up to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Calvary satisfies wholly this craving of guilt for propitiation. The cross forever displaces the altar. This strengthens the natural conclusion that one element in the faith that made Abel's offering acceptable was the sense of guilt and need of propitiation met by the shedding of blood, an experience wholly wanting in Cain's sacrifice of a mere thank-offering. The first worshipers could walk with God in the freedom of innocence and obedience. After the Fall, that approach is lost. Obedience is a causeway swept down by flood. The spirit must now reach its God over the bridge of faith hung from above. But the bitterest of all beginnings in our lesson is the first death. A sculptor has wrought in marble, full life-size, this mother lifting the dead son from the ground, gazing into his face with unspeakable ques-

tionings. No answer from the fond lips — no look from the gentle eyes — what can it mean? Awe, terror, and heart-breaking grief struggle in her features. It is hard enough, God knows, after all these centuries to take into the heart this mystery, horror, and agony of death! What must it have been to hearts all unprepared! Thank God once more for life and incorruption brought to light through the gospel.

II. *The development of sin.* Evil, once introduced, seems to have the right of way. Philosophize about it as we may, sinful parents beget sinful children.

> "The evil deed's avenging curse it is
> That evil evermore it should beget."

Man moves with a shadow at his side, dark and distorted pattern of his true self, intercepting light that shines from God. A bad heart makes worthless worship. Cain stands beside his rejected offering, downcast, and very wroth. But worse is at hand unless he repents. What a startling picture this of the man at his tent door, and sin, tiger-like, crouching in the shadow, quivering to spring upon him as he comes out. To meet temptation is a sinner's fate; it is part of the penalty of sin. His call is to fight it, his honor to master it. But God's warning is rejected, the temptation unresisted. Jealousy is fanned to hatred, hatred blazes out in murder. "The beast without has become the beast within." The child whom the fond mother named "Gotten with God" stands with hands dripping with a brother's blood. So terribly rapid is the ripening of sin. Might not the race have waited a few generations before such terrific payment of its wages? Other truths are made conspicuous. These earliest accounts are notable for emphasizing the fact that God is not slack concerning evil. Cain finds immediately, as did Adam and Eve, that God has not ignored his crime.

His Maker takes personal account of the sin, denounces its guilt, adjusts the punishment, watches its execution. Is punishment remedial? Not of necessity; not in this test case which stands so conspicuously at the beginning. Punishment does not, of necessity, soften the heart; it may harden it. Instead of arousing godly sorrow and longing for reconciliation, it may but stimulate sullen self-will. Instead of contrition of penitence we see only the attrition of selfish desire to escape just reward of suffering. Cain goes out into the land of Nod, "Wandering," an exile from home and from a share in God's plan. After five generations his seed disappears from the record. Over him, as over those outside the Holy City in the final Revelation, closes a darkness in which sounds no joy, shines no light.

III. *A study in brotherhood.* The tie which binds those born in the same home is the deepest and strongest in human nature. It means closest fellowship, helpfulness, love. The mysterious but mighty force of heredity, lying back of education, of will itself, links soul to soul. Nourished in the same arms, growing up in the same helpful care; inheriting a common hope; worshiping at the same altar, lifting heart and hands to the same God; truly life is bound to life. No purer affection lightens this world than the sweet companionship of the home, enswathing infant lives, expanding in the sports and ambitions of youth, enriching mature years, softening the austerities of age and death. Peculiarly beautiful is the relation of the older brother or sister to the younger. De Quincey's tribute to his sister is among the classics of both literature and life. George Eliot's sweet poem "Brother and Sister" reveals heart history in its pretty story and impressive close: —

> "But were another childhood world my share,
> I would be born a little sister there."

But the first child slew his brother. Sin spoils anything, even God's best gifts. Beware of jealousy. It is the wild beast crouching at the door, which, once seizing its victim, perchance quits not its hold till the very heart's blood is drained. No other sin is cause of more evil in homes, no other more easily starts, is less noticed and rebuked.

But all the race are brothers, whether through these first parents or under God the Father of all. Question biology again, and it declares that in every individual is some actual atom, however infinitesimal, that was in each one of his ancestors, even back to father Adam. And the word of God declares Him to be the Father of us all. To raise the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is to join the party of Cain who was of that wicked one and slew his brother. No need here to show how all dangers and hopes of social and national life root back in this question and the answer given to it. Capital and labor, combinations and trades-unions, lockouts and strikes; nationalism, socialism, anarchy; popular government or monarchy; education, compulsory, public, private, secular or religious; immigration, school, ballot, lynch-law South or West; the red Indian with his reservation or his citizenship; the Chinaman inoffensive yet most offensive to some; every branch and form of church work, out to the conversion of the world's heathen; all these are suggestions of the meaning and demands of this first brother's question in the civilization and salvation of this nineteenth century. Relationship through Adam is no strong force to conjure with. But it is a living truth that sonship with God means brotherhood with man. Love God with all the heart, and to love our neighbor as ourself is a sure consequence. All who long for a better social condition must come back at last to the great and true Elder Brother. Through him find God the

Father; then and then only, will man be seen and treated as our brother.

The lesson is full of suggestions concerning worship and sin, made conspicuous by standing at the beginnings of God's dealings with man.

All are required to worship, and propitiation is an essential part of human worship. God at the beginning set apart the Sabbath to indicate and develop man's true relation of dependence and gratitude towards himself; and after sin entered the world, sacrifices are required to declare confession of guilt and the faith that accepts mercy.

Acceptable worship requires a believing heart.

Temptation lies in wait for the evil in heart. It may find occasion in the rites of worship and the ties of brotherhood. To sin, nothing is sacred. Nor is sin satisfied by yielding to it. Every sin leads into temptation to greater sin. No sin is too slight to issue at last in deadliest crime.

Sin against our brother man is sin against God. Sin against God will strike at the brother also. Both are wronged by every sin.

God takes account of sin. For this it is not necessary that the sinner should acknowledge his responsibility. Punishment comes, and that punishment is in the hand of God. Fear of punishment is not sorrow for sin — Cain showed no remorse; remorse is not repentance; repentance is not restoration. Punishment follows sin as a natural result, wages paid, fruit reaped. Reconciliation, repentance, redemption, need the intervention of grace.

All the paths of the Bible lead to Christ. This bitter tragedy shows the need and the glory that God should give us an Elder Brother, who shall be not destroyer but redeemer; shall win to himself, thus to his God and our God, thus to the lowliest or the loftiest child of man as

our own close kindred. This is indeed the Son whom the first mother vainly looked for in the first child, whom every Hebrew mother under the covenant looked to find in her own babe. "Who offered himself an acceptable sacrifice, whose blood speaketh better than that of Abel." The blood of Abel's sacrifice, by itself alone, was but the cry of a helpless guilt for escape. The blood of the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world. The blood of Abel himself cried from the outraged earth to the listening heaven for vengeance. The blood of Christ, crimsoning the earth at the foot of the cross, makes full atonement and sprinkles the guilty heart from an evil conscience.

Charles M. Southgate.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.

GENESIS 9:8–17.

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying," etc.

SEVEN times in these few verses is mention made concerning God's covenant. The term denotes an agreement or pledge between two parties, as when Laban and Jacob separated from each other. The term is modified in the relations between God and men. God there pledges certain blessings conditional upon human performance of certain conditions. Thus the covenant with Abraham involved the act of circumcision, the omission of which act made the covenant void. The laws of Sinai are called a covenant, but the fulfillment of their conditions is the essential factor in the agreement. In a yet broader sense the term covers the Old Testament in one form and the New Testament in another. The certainty of the divine promise, irreversible except humanly broken, has well merited the name.

It is to be noticed that the divine covenant has usually marked some special forward step in history. It was renewed with Abraham upon the promise of the land for his dwelling place. Again it was repeated upon the announcement of the birth of Isaac. His vision was uplifted to the stars above him as emblematic of the multitudes who should call him father. In the lives of Isaac and Jacob the same covenant blessings were renewed. Just as in our early history the Pilgrim Fathers formed their compact in the name of God, so in Jewish history each forward step was taken after the most solemn agreement.

The text includes the covenanted blessing pronounced upon Noah and his sons after the deliverance from the flood. Great and divine promises followed the inflicted destruction. No more should the ground be cursed. Never again through all ages should the terrible experience of such destruction be paralleled. The promise was spoken by One whose power would make it good: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." It was the clear air after the terrific storm. In place of the multitudes who had been swept from the face of the earth, another host should come. With the father of such a host the covenant was made. It was to be a new beginning, but all the waters of the flood had not washed evil off the earth. Perfection of life was not in the ark, rolling and floating without pilot or chart, until God left it where he would. Evil and sin were not extirpated, but history should be written on a new and clean page. Human history begun in paradise; degenerated into the wickedness of Babel; now it was to begin anew, only to have its Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked cities of the plain, not even as monstrous in sin and unbelief as should be Capernaum and Bethsaida, who would give no honor to the Son of God.

The paths of human life point to a corruption no waters can wash away. Depravity is not a sentiment. The ugliest foe of goodness is from within the human breast. The history begun with Adam was to be repeated from Noah.

We notice a few lessons from the sacred records:—

I. *With whom the covenant was made.* The preacher of righteousness, when weighed in the balance, was found wanting. His had been a wonderful faith. Against the scorn and ridicule of all men he had stood alone. When the skies were brightest, he preached the coming flood.

Year in and year out, he never ceased his message. One had spoken whose words he knew. His carpenters had taken their wages and laughed at his credulity; but still he had never once faltered. The prevalent wickedness around him only served to declare the grandeur of his faith. "He walked with God." He endured as seeing him who is invisible, like another hero of faith.

And yet he was not perfect. It is scarcely to be supposed that men in such a childish early age must be judged by the brighter light of this later day. They did not have the life of Christ for an example. Blemishes are more conspicuous upon those whose general character is nearest right. David's sin increases in malignant venom just in proportion to his strong professions. Peter's denial found its cruelty in the knowledge of his better opportunities. It seems a blemish inexcusable when we read of Noah's drunkenness so soon after the giving of the divine blessing. It was a strange attitude for one whose faith had confronted the unbelief and sin of the world for a hundred and twenty years. Inspiration never forgets the blemishes of the best. Man, left to himself, is a poor example. No life becomes strong except with the continued grace of God; yet the lives with which God enters into covenant are far from perfect. The Uzziahs who presume to steady the ark are not adapted to what they attempt; and many another, chosen of God as was Noah, brings sorrow to the heart of God.

II. *The occasion for the covenant.* The reference is to the dire disaster whose existence has been recorded in so many national histories. The deluge has been termed the most universal of all traditions. Its belief was rooted in the annals of Chaldea and finds its recital in the library of the palace of Nineveh. It has its place in the writings of Zoroaster. Grecian legendary history records the deluge of Deucalion corresponding in its narration

with the records of Genesis. Coins of Phrygia were stamped with the figures of the ark and the returning dove with the olive branch. Traditions of the catastrophe were found among the wildest tribes of men holding America. Skepticism has aimed its shafts of doubt upon the biblical account; and yet against all such attempts we record the conclusion of the distinguished scholar, Lenormant: "We need not hesitate to state that the biblical deluge, far from being a myth, was an actual and historic fact, which overwhelmed at the very least the ancestors of the three races of Aryans or Indo-Europeans, Semites or Syro-Arabians, and Chamites or Kushites; in other words, the three great civilized races of the ancient world."

The divine covenant with Noah proclaimed that no other such deluge should ever again bring ruin upon the races of men. It was the pledge of hope. To the family of the patriarch there was desolation everywhere — every one gone, every creature gone, except the little company that the ark had brought safely through; no voice from the crowds of builders and shepherds and traffickers whose busy lives were ended by the fearful storm. The feasts of those who were found eating and drinking when the heavens were opened were only in memory. The frivolous carnivals of those who had been marrying and giving in marriage were ended in funereal gloom. The world after its fitful fever was lonesome. To the little family circle, the divine covenant was the dawn of hope; it meant a new start. The future alone could declare whether human nature had profited by the terrible lesson of destruction. Dwellers on mountain sides where the upheaval of the earthquake has cast terror have listened to the last echo of the awful rumbling sound and then gone on sinning as though their complacency had not been disturbed. Charred and smoking ruins have marked

the site of cities that once throbbed with life; but burning down the dwellings has not regenerated those who once occupied them. The deluge was no factor in the world's regeneration. It was a warning; yet hearts sometimes have grown harder under such indications. The covenant of God did not ensure human goodness, even while it inspired hope.

III. *The theme of the covenant.* It proclaimed the sanctity and the preciousness of human life. The wholesale destruction of the race gave no indication of any lessening of value in human existence. The secret of the injunction lay in the words: "for in the image of God made he man." There was a merciless command involved in the covenant; "At the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

More than this. The divine covenant included even the beasts of the earth and the creatures of the sky. Cruelty may be as readily seen in the attitude of the heart towards dumb beasts as towards men. It is not the magnitude of the object harmed that gives the measure of the sin, but the motive that works the deed. It does not require even Scriptural testimony to declare that the merciful man is merciful to beasts. Beware of those who can calmly tear off the tiny wings from the quivering fly; who can delight in the cries of pain wrung from even a dog; who grind under their heel the butterfly that has stayed his noiseless flight for a moment's rest. The excuse for cruelty is not valid in the words: "Only a dog;" the weight of the evil is not given in the apology: "It was only a fly." The heart that has pleasure in tormenting the least of God's creatures will fall upon something greater when occasion offers. The creatures of God, stung to madness with inflicted pains, are strongest witnesses against the human hearts that register in every

moan their own degradation, and write their future deeds towards men in what at first they inflict upon even the beasts.

Repeated expressions of Scripture make known the divine estimate concerning creatures whose usefulness men do not apprehend. Six times in this brief passage is reference made to God's covenant over what is termed "every living creature of all flesh." The rainbow betokens the covenant between God "and all flesh that is upon the earth."

IV. *The token of the covenant: the rainbow.* It has always been a custom to indicate by a sign the agreement into which parties have entered. Every written deed or paper is such a token; and upon it each party is expected and compelled to look. If the agreement is broken, there remains the sign.

Then again: every great action has been perpetuated by a sign or token. Jacob built a heap of stones that should always remain as a testimony of what he had seen; it was a testimony to the centuries that should come of what blessing he had been a recipient. Such a custom was especially perpetuated among the Jews. The pillars of stone by the wayside often had a momentous history to declare. Such was Mizpeh; and again such was the stone set up by Samuel to denote the defeat of the Philistines, and called by him Ebenezer. It has underlying it the same principle as our building of memorials at the present day. Bunker Hill Monument recalls to every passer-by a momentous event in the great struggle for freedom. Our great battlefields are thus marked. The monumental pile is the sign or token of some magnificent sacrifice or achievement.

The covenant of God was thus signified in various ways. When under the shadows of the night the father of the faithful received the promise of his future great-

ness, God pointed him to the stars whose numbers he could not give, as indicating the countlessness of his race. Who shall suppose that Abraham could fail of the deep impression of such a covenant, a single night in all his life? The stars of heaven betokened what his family should become. The token of the covenant with Noah was the matchless thing of beauty whose substance vanishes as you near it and whose brilliancy transcends the power of genius to adequately comprehend. The finest attempt of artist to pattern it is almost a mockery. None but a hand divine could hang it upon the clouds. Its span of arch no architect has duplicated — it is too massive. Its colors are shaded in a blending of harmony beyond human skill to imitate. It spans the sky under which the tempest has but just furiously twisted the trees into fantastic shapes; and it arches the sky above the ocean whose waves have been lashed into surfs by the cyclone; it is the divine framework above the meadows where the cattle feed; it hangs above the city, undimmed by the smoke of furnace and unmoved by the jarring blows of human thrift; it crowns the mountain range with divine symmetry and seems above the valley the arching roof of God's great Temple whose flooring is the velvet of green. None wearies of looking upon its brilliant glories. After all these ages of human life, its constant recurring after the storm reminds of the covenant of God with Noah. It is the token of a great history under the promise of the divine care. God is behind and above it, looking on its span: "The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

The rainbow was no new creation; its history does not begin with the time of God speaking to Noah; but it has become a token of a language God speaks. It must have

hung over Eden; it rested upon the clouds above the river of the golden sands. The flood was no new adjustment of atmospheric laws; and God chose it to be the perpetual reminder of his deep and lasting sympathy with men. While spanning the clouds it is from God; and God has given his pledge that he is looking upon it — the reminder to us of his mercy and the token of everlasting love.

David O. Mears.

BEGINNING OF THE HEBREW NATION.

GENESIS 12: 1–9.

"Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee," etc.

ALL history begins with God: not with star dust swirling through space; not with protoplasm and monads; not with a law of evolution or a natural law; these, without God behind and within them, are mere philosophical conceptions to help fill a vacuum in the mind that asks Whence and Whither? We open the Bible and its first sentence shows us the beginnings of true history. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Accepting that, we are in a position to go much farther and to see an order and a meaning and a progress in all things and all events which without God would be a mere chaos. Nor is the Bible merely a religious view of events which might have another explanation and show another sort of coherence and progress. The Bible shows us that religion, with its realities of God, faith, truth, duty, redemption, is the very soul of history. Without religion binding earth and heaven, matter and spirit, there would be no history at all, only an order of succession in things and events, without meaning and end before them.

And the *method* of the Bible is in itself full of interest and of power over the world. In false faiths like Brahmanism we have brought to us mere abstractions, mere contemplations of a Deity and struggles of the human mind to reach a comprehension of what that Deity may be. In the Bible everything is concrete. God is active and we watch with constant wonder what he is doing. He makes

the worlds, puts sky and clouds into their places, forms an earth for the creatures to inhabit, and lastly man in his own image. Then he appears, speaking to man words of promise and command. Everything is seen to root itself in a holy and righteous Will from which worlds stream forth and answer their purposes, and man crowns all.

This purpose and meaning in history become the clearer when we come to beginnings of the religious faith which is to subdue and renovate and bless all the earth till the end of time, in this simple narrative of the twelfth of Genesis. There had been faith since the fall: first in Eve, then in Seth and his line; and that there were some holy men who cherished, after a general lapse into idolatry, a faith in one God appears in such characters as Melchizedek, who came out to meet Abraham. But now religion was to take definite form and become an institution, with its laws, ceremonies, authority, and covenants of promise. And again we note the simplicity and power of the Bible in its very method of setting forth before us these beginnings which are not in vague contemplations or mere inward hopes and struggles after the infinite holiness and truth, but the acts of a great man who first was spoken to by God and who heard and went forth in practical obedience to the visions and voices which had come to him. All history, it is true, begins with God, and all true religion is not man's reaching upward towards him who is invisible, but His coming out of his remoteness and seeking some to worship him and speaking to them words of promise and command.

So the Hebrew nation began with a man. We ask, What were some of the characteristics which fitted him to become the father of the faithful and the heir of all the world?

I. *He was a man of faith.* We must expand our definition of faith in order to measure the greatness of Abra-

ham's life, which was spent in such a vastly distant past and before faith had built up itself in the laws and customs of men and taken on those forms which give it authority over the conscience and heart. To many of us faith would seem to be the acceptance of certain written statements concerning Christ our Lord and Saviour, or a personal surrender to him presented in manifold ways to our affections and our interest.

No written words were spread before his eye or forms of sound doctrine addressed to his conscience and heart, nor was the great Redeemer yet on earth as a figure in veritable history made known to him with entreaties and promises and testimonies of a multitude of the faithful. All was to him hidden in the mere word of the invisible God and the bare promise of future blessings. He had to look forward while we look backward and upward. Nothing gave weight to what he heard from the heavens in the institutions or hopes or influences about him in the idolatrous country where he dwelt. Joshua said to the Israelites: "Your fathers worshipped other gods." Open idolatry abounded and was the visible form of what was left of religion from the fall.

So Abraham had to have *within himself* the evidence which abounds around us, and this lends a grandeur to the words of Jesus: "Your father Abraham saw my day and was glad." Faith as it is seen in him is the evidence itself of things not seen and it makes ordinary proofs what they are. It sets its own value on them and finds reasons for great and revolutionary actions in what gives nothing to the mind without faith. Others, standing by, say, "It thunders," when John hears a voice out of the skies. Now Abraham was worthy to become the father of the faithful because he was equal to receiving spiritual impressions, giving them their due weight and promptly obeying them. Such a faith as his is not an inward

enthusiasm without solid basis in facts, but it takes away the veil that falls down over the real and near world of spiritual things wherein God dwells and makes himself known.

II. *Abraham was a called man.*

Many have a measure of faith which saves and blesses them and is helpful to the society around them, who yet retain it as a personal treasure without making it a power in the earth for the overturning of evils and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. They are like Isaac rather than Jacob, and may have some of the attractive qualities of the quiet, meditative man who had no wrestling with the angel of the covenant. In Abraham there was something more than receptiveness and the effort to live aright and win heaven for himself. He was of such stuff as to be used of God in doing something for all mankind and acting with all mankind and future ages in his sight. Not every one is called, because not every one is capable of accepting and obeying a call of God. Generations passed before one appeared of the right mold to lead out a movement in the history of redemption. This "call" comprised at once a command and a promise.

The command was threefold: to leave his country with its fond associations and betake himself to a land whose scenery should only appear to him as he obeyed and went forth not knowing whither he went; to leave his *kindred* who came closer to his heart; and lastly *his father's house*, the inmost circle. But corresponding promises of blessing follow the severe orders. God would make of him a great nation to supplant the heathen and perishing nation from which he escaped; then God would bless him with temporal prosperity above all that would come "beyond the flood"; thirdly, he would make his name great in the place of his father's name, which would have been lost

but for the half-forgotten chronology of the eleventh chapter of this book. How many of the world know the names of the father and mother of Moses and of the father of the great Abraham? But even higher blessings are set forth. This man was himself to be a blessing to mankind; all its families would be blessed in him; Gentiles should share the promises made to the chosen seed, and ultimately the same faith which was his glory and possession should become the faith of all God's people on the earth. Here we have an epitome of the history of the true religion until the end comes.

And no doubt to the friends of Abraham his obedience to an inward summons seemed very strange and dangerous. The civilization around him had all the elements of dignity and power and lastingness. The world appeared as old as it does now and the religions as venerable and sacred as to-day. Recent discoveries show that a high state of civilization prevailed early in the great valley of the Tigris. Writing, books, paper, government, laws, and religions were there. He left much that gave worth and prosperity and happiness when with his household he turned from the land of his birth and the certainties of comfort and power for a place he knew not what and a path unrevealed. He heard a call.

III. *Abraham was essentially a separatist.*

He could not serve God where he was, or remain under a perpetual protest, and so the form of the call made him wander forth to find a suitable environment for the religion that was to change the whole world. He must needs raise a rude altar out of the stones of a strange country and let the smoke of its sacrifice curl upward in an atmosphere wholly free from the incense of his father's idolatry. And in his inmost spirit he was not of the world around him, but remained a solitary man. The very soil he trod upon in the very country given him and his posterity

remained foreign to him to the last, and he died not having received the promises. He came out from the world of his day just as the apostles came out from their world in a solemn and lifelong protest against it. Had Abraham lived later he would have been among the reformers of the continent of Europe or a Puritan in England and America, and in these times he would have espoused unpopular reforms.

For the first time in Scripture the phrase is used here: "The Lord appeared." He had *spoken* before to man, but now he *appeared* in some way not recorded. It is significant that the vision follows after obedience to the call, for it is the same with us, that the path of the just shineth more and more unto perfect day.

These, in brief, are the leading features of this history which comes before us with profound meanings. But it remains for us to see: —

IV. *This beginning is in harmony with the history of the Jewish race, with the spiritual Israel of the Christian Church, and with the personal experience of the Christian believer.*

The Jewish race is the most wonderful and mysterious of all the races of mankind. Whatever past history may have to say about it, we must not suppose that the Jew has not an important part yet to play in the fulfillment of these original covenants and promises made to Abraham. No other race shows the persistent endurance which belongs to the descendants of Abraham. It is a bush that burns forever and yet will not be consumed. During the larger part of its history before Christ it was in servitude to surrounding nations or at war with itself, and for eighteen hundred years it has existed on the sufferance of mankind — cursed, abused, robbed, persecuted, denied common civil rights, and made a hissing and a byword; and yet it has maintained its mysterious hopes of ruling the world and been true to itself.

It is the only race whose history has been written for it in advance and whose future is interwoven with the triumphs of Christ over mankind. Never numerous as compared with the nations which it has bowed down to or lived among, it has always furnished great men to be counselors of kings from the days of Nehemiah and Daniel down to those of Disraeli in the court of Victoria. A little more than a century ago it began to have civil rights in England and then, by the Constitution of the United States, it stood on an equality with all other people, while in the Revolution of 1798 it obtained its rights and privileges in France. Steadily the Jew has come into influence, until the nations of Europe cannot go to war without a Jew banker and the recent cruel acts of expulsion from Russia and of anti-Semitism in Germany come from his preponderating power in the money markets. Spinoza in philosophy, Mendelssohn in music, Neander, Delitzsch, and Edersheim in history and criticism suggest the high place in the world of thought held by descendants of Israel. All this greatness of faith in its own future, this expectation of owning the world and ruling over it, appears in Abraham, who, without any light around him from the past, yet looked forward to remote ages and saw himself a blessing and his posterity as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore.

Now the Jew rejected his Messiah and crucified him and was scattered abroad over the earth, and the Gentiles came into his inheritance of faith and enjoy all that was promised to the chosen people. What was true of Abraham in his hearing a call is true of the Christian body from age to age. It has before itself the promise of filling and subduing the earth and it prays daily: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The idea of a divine calling pervades a true Christian experience. The apostles were called out from

country, kindred, and father's house to be with Jesus and to be sent forth at his will. The first believers are addressed as those who are called to be saints: "Ye see your calling, brethren. Walk worthy of God who hath called you into his kingdom and glory. Whom he called, them he also justified." The higher the form of personal Christian service the surer the question: Are you inwardly called of God to this work?

And so the Jews have always been a separate people in all things, herding together, retaining the same type of countenance, and preserving vigor of mind and body. True to their *calling out* from the other nations, they will some time be true to their *calling in* to the fold of Christ. Possibly the predicted conversion of the race will show a wonderful unity of action, a swollen river bursting ancient banks and pouring itself out upon the sea. Are we praying for this great consummation?

But Christianity exists only by leaving every other faith and being true to itself, refusing to stand as one in the pantheon of world religions. "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." The study of comparative religions shows us to-day some points of likeness in many of the ancient faiths, and the one faith that is to change the world, for God has never left himself without a witness. The World's Congress of Religions only emphasizes the primitive convictions and intuitions of the race. But the gospel is exclusive as well as inclusive. The cultured Brahman, the accomplished Confucianist, the learned Parsee must leave country, kindred, and father's house and go into a new land only to be made known to faith in Jesus Christ.

Lastly, in the call of Abraham, in his obedience to the heavenly vision, in his leaving all behind him and going out to a land to be made known afterward and to be

secured by promise, we have a type of every genuine Christian experience. It begins with the voice of God in the conscience troubling us over our sins, or in the affections which lure us away from the life we have loved, or in some revelation of the beauty and excellence of the Saviour whom we must leave and follow. And when we let the dead bury their dead and simply go forward in daily obedience, the Lord reveals himself more and more to us in the new and strange pilgrimage. Paul was not disobedient to his heavenly vision and again and again visions came to him, fitting him for fresh perils and tasks. Eternal life to you and me, personally, comes only by hearing what God has said and trustfully doing his will. It is a transforming thing to put that little sentence into the foreground of our convictions: "God said."

"I would have my own way in the world and seek my own pleasure, but God has said!"

"I am surrounded by many comforts where I now am and the land of faith is uncertain and far away, but God has said!"

"Here I am enriched with goods laid up for many years, but God has said!"

"Time is abundant in which to prepare to leave all I now possess and a clearer call may sound in my ears, but ah! I have heard the still small voice and will it come again if I refuse him that speaketh?"

To every one of us a call sounds out, loud and clear or low and penetrating, and among us there may be some one whose faith shall open new kingdoms to Immanuel. "Hear and your soul shall live!"

Edward N. Packard.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.

GENESIS 17: 1–9.

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine," etc.

No event in sacred story, Christ's atoning death excepted, has so quickened inquiry and grateful memory as the divine call of Abram and the peculiar personal relations which the infinite God established between himself and the humble son of a Mesopotamian shepherd has done. The "Abrahamic covenant" has been a biblical and theological phrase, somewhat mystical indeed, but always powerful, carrying encouragement and inspiration to consecrated souls. Infant baptism has been tenderly cherished and faithfully perpetuated as an entrance into covenant relations established in Abraham's time and handed down the ages — a privileged inheritance, of which conveyance is made to the children of believers through the agency of baptismal waters and the faith of parents. This covenant has, in practice, been regarded as building a divine kingdom by methods and agents mainly sustained by God's independent planning and procuring because of Abraham's faith and obedience. Once in that covenant kingdom, the soul, though but a child, has great safety, and heaven's bliss and glory are well-nigh certain in final fulfillment of that covenant. There is a measure of truth in these general and long-cherished convictions, and there is much to account for their prevalence and power. Abraham is a glorious figure in sacred history. "He lived on terms of fellowship with God such as have not been seen since the days of Eden. Voices addressed him from the skies — angels paid visits to his tent — and visions of

celestial glory hallowed his lowly couch and mingled with his nightly dreams." [1]

"No other character in history, sacred or profane, has left such a broad mark in the world. When one looks closely into the course of revelation in Holy Scripture, the name of Abraham appears to tower over the centuries. In point of fact it meets none to excel or rival it till the divine name of Jesus Christ himself is reached." [2]

Magnificent, almost sublime, the dramatic vividness of the nine interviews vouchsafed Abraham by the infinite God. Certainly any personal relations, or organized institution, thus established must have priceless meaning. But the inadequacy of human speech as a vehicle for great truths often opens the door to misinterpretation. This is illustrated in the common understanding of the subject of our lesson. In common life, covenant means an agreement between contracting parties, equal as related to the transaction, by which both bind themselves to keep the contract made. But in Scripture the term covenant is used in an analogical sense — the chief parallel is in the fact of personal relations between God and men, individual or collective; but the parallel fails in that God's promises are always conditioned upon what man may do in the future — a future sometimes far distant — and about his part there remains a stupendous uncertainty. It is all right to speak of a covenant with Adam, with Enoch, with Noah, with Abram, with Moses, with David; but it should also be remembered that each of these was mainly, almost wholly, only a promise, an act of mere favor, by which God declared his attitude and purposes. After the flood the promise was given that a like judgment should not be repeated — that recurring seasons and day and night should not cease. This is called a covenant (Gen. ix; Jer. 33 : 20). The only resemblance to a covenant compact, in the ordinary understanding of the term, is in the

[1] Rev. Thomas Guthrie, D.D. [2] Rev. Oswald Dykes, D.D.

conditions upon which God declares the fulfillment of his gracious promises to defend. "The covenant with Abraham was conditioned by circumcision (Acts 7:8), the omission of which was declared tantamount to a breach of the covenant (Gen. xvii); the covenant of the priesthood by zeal for God, his honor and service (Num. 25:12, 13; Deut. 33:9; Neh. 13:29; Mal. 2:4, 5); the covenant of Sinai by an observance of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:27, 28; Lev. 26:15), which are therefore called Jehovah's covenant (Deut. 4:13), a name which was extended to all the books of Moses, if not to the whole body of Jewish canonical Scriptures (2 Cor. 3:13, 14)."

"In Scripture the covenant of God is called his counsel, his oath, his promise (Ps. 89:3, 4; 105:8–11; Heb. 6:13–20; Luke 1:68–75; Gal. 3:15–18), and it is described as consisting wholly in the gracious bestowal of blessing on men (Is. 59:21; Jer. 31:33, 34)."

This detailed discussion of the real meaning and use of the divine covenants is given here to prevent a common and unfortunate error. When thinking of such covenants, — the Abrahamic in particular — emphasis should be laid chiefly upon their conditions on our part — careful and unremitting obedience, without which we shall have no part or lot in covenant blessings. But, in practice, it is easy, perhaps frequent, unduly to emphasize God's part and be lulled into unauthorized and perilous security. No general acceptance of any arrangements between God and Adam, Noah, Abraham, or Moses, or David, however sealed by ceremonial rite, then or now, will avail anything without personal obedience spurred to the last possibility of faithfulness without a shadow of reliance upon Abraham or any other Bible hero.

However true, or needed, these preliminary thoughts upon the general theme of our lesson, there is none the less of interest and instruction centering in its story.

God has done much for man: in his faculties, his environment, so fair and inspiring to look upon and so abundant in resources — food, metals, and adjuvant forces, almost unlimited, which multiply the possibilities of his varied natural strength of muscle or intellect; but he needs more than all this. Because of this vast enduement of power and possibilities, we need sympathy, guidance, and coöperation from One mightier than ourselves and always within reach. Mistakes are easy and their disaster is always in proportion to the magnitude of the issues and powers involved.

The Bible answers this evident need by plain revelation that the infinite God enters into relations with earth's children, intelligible and practicable as are relations with fellow men or nature's laws and forces. God was in such relations with families in patriarchal time; but in our lesson he singles out one family for special intimacy and dealings with intentions that looked far down the ages, even into the eternities.

Verse 1. "Abram was ninety years old and nine." God's delays do not mean denials. Abram was an old man, but he had a magnificent future, as the Christian always has. God's plans took hold of his life and it developed with unlimited reach and beneficence. God times his providential care and revelations with infinite wisdom and love. No life is beyond his vision, and the use he will make of it depends only upon its possibilities for good. Abraham's is a typical illustration of the welcome fact that God's plans include constant reliance upon human instrumentality; and he finds no embarrassment under circumstances, to our view, most unfavorable. The grounds of confidence upon which not only Abraham but all his spiritual seed may forever rest are given in the words, "I am Almighty God." There is as much in the gospel of power as in the gospel of love. Most helpful here the critical and

scholarly Murphy: "The Lord, the author of existence and performance — God Almighty, El Shaddai. El, the lasting, eternal, absolute Shaddai; the irresistible, unchangeable, destructive (Is. 13:6; Joel 1:15). This term indicates on the one hand his judicial punitive power, and points to his holiness; and on the other hand, his alterative, reconstructive power, and points to his providence. The complex name, therefore, describes God as the Holy Spirit, who works in the development of things, especially in the punishment and eradication of sin and its works, and in the regeneration and defense of holiness. It refers to potence, and potence combined with promise affords grounds for faith."

We beat against fetters and bars — conscious weakness a conspicuous characteristic of all our lives. God knows nothing of such fetters. Great the encouragement from his power. He can turn to best account all there is in and of us. He can control all things without — all the external forces which affect our lives and destiny. His plans comprehend all future contingencies; events are marshaled and form crises to work out his purposes. The obdurate sinner may well tremble before such power; but the obedient believer exults in it.

When God said to Abram, "Walk before me," man's highest dignity was indicated by the possibility of such relations with the Infinite. The command is an invitation. It assumes that man can do God service, can please him; can have divine companionship — that he is not intended for inferior fellowships.

"Be thou perfect." An eloquent suggestion of man's essential or natural possibilities. Deranged, wrecked it may be; but restoration is possible. Neither failures nor sins need dishearten. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. Divine invitations are not given in mockery; over against all finite weakness lies infinite strength.

Wherever and whatever he is, man's standard is never to be less than perfection. That belongs to him by birthright, by the dignity and possibilities of his station and destiny. In the early dawn of human story, revealed in our lesson, the star of glad optimism shines glorious. A living writer of Scotland thus interprets it: "All possibility lies in this: I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. Do not train your eye to earthly distances and earthly magnitudes and limit your hope accordingly, but live in the presence of the Almighty God. Do not defer the advices of conscience and your purest aspirations to some other possible world; do not settle down at the low level of godless nature and the men around you; do not give way to what you yourselves know to be weakness and evidence of defeat; do not let self-indulgence take the place of my commandments, indolence supplant resolution, and the likelihoods of human calculation obliterate the hopes stirred by the divine call. Be thou perfect. Is not this a summons that comes appropriately to every man? Whatever be our contentment, our attainments, our possessions, a new light is shed upon our condition when we measure it by God's idea and God's resources. Is my life God's ideal? Does that which satisfies me satisfy him?"

God is invisible; but Charnock says: "Angels have not a greater measure of his essential presence than we have." How often we dwell in the presence of earthly friends, though far removed, through love's devotion and the vivid ministries of thought!

Verse 2. When Abraham and his seed should thus do their part, God's attitude will remain forever unchanged — in all things their Friend. This is declared with an emphasis that employs the figure of a covenant agreement such as men use in assuming relations most binding and enduring.

Verse 3. God's providence is full of surprises. It was no unknown experience for Abraham to meet God in a marvelous theophany, as at Ur, at the oak of Moreh, at Haran, and at Bethel; but he "fell on his face" overwhelmed by promises and prospects beyond his fondest imagination. Such surprises are in waiting for all God's children — not the same in occasion and circumstance, but equally transcending all expectation and human probability.

God "talked" with Abram. Such communication of the Infinite with the finite is as possible now as then — is as real. The dealings of Old Testament story are reported to all the ages, that their essential and permanent lessons may be helpful. We have only to look for such messages and they will come. God will talk with us — not in the same way as with Abraham, but as really.

Verse 4. Individual achievement turns upon its relations with God. Abraham is promised to be "the father of a multitude of nations" — that being the outcome of God's plan concerning him — a plan which is styled a "covenant." But as another has said, "It was a gift from a superior, rather than a bargain between equals; and as it was accompanied by the rite of circumcision, it was typical of the freedom of that covenant made afterwards to Christians in Christ, and sealed to them in the sacred rite of baptism." Without underrating the sealing power of baptism, we would give equal efficacy to any act of obedience which develops and declares the inward faith because of which and through which covenant blessings are perpetuated.

Verse 6. Abraham has become "a multitude of nations," by natural descent as the ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel, of the Ishmaelites, of the descendants of Keturah and the Edomites; and he is the spiritual father of all who by faith in Christ are Abraham's seed "accord-

ing to the promise" (Gal. 3 : 29). "*Nations* is a term usually applied, not to the chosen people, but to the other great branches of the human race. This points to the original promise that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed."

Verse 5. Henceforth Abraham is another man in his relations with God and with the world, present and prospective. This new and potential state of things must be proclaimed with all possible emphasis. When God said "Thy name shall be Abraham" he made public and impressive announcement of his omnipotent decree. He took the world into the secret of his sovereign will. Grant the interest to the human party concerned, and his descendants, centering in this change of name; that interest pales before the stupendous fact that the infinite God not only reveals his decrees that span long ages, but, as it were, puts himself under conspicuous bonds for their fulfillment. Henceforth, whenever the changed name was spoken, to the end of time, it not only made revelation of God's purpose, but also reëchoed his generous and marvelous promise.

This is the most conspicuous example in Bible story of changed character registered and declared by change of name, but it is not the only one. Jacob became Israel (Gen. 32 : 28); Simon, Peter (Matt. 16 : 18); Saul, Paul (Acts 13 : 9). For all true believers a similar transformation and new name of honor and promise is in sure waiting (Is. 62 : 2; Rev. 3 : 12).

Verses 7–9. God's plans and promises for Abraham had unlimited scope and they cannot fail. How explain these promises in an "everlasting covenant" — literal Hebrew, covenant of eternity — that all the land of Canaan should be an "everlasting possession" for Abraham and his seed, and that he would be their God — how explain all this with the expatriation, overthrow, and humiliation which

have come to Abraham's seed in tragedy unequaled? In Scripture usage, ordinances and personal relations are often termed everlasting when the idea of unchangeable continuance is conditioned. So long as the conditions are observed the situation will remain unchanged. In the Old Testament, divine ordinances are declared to be everlasting; and yet in the New Testament they are abrogated in the letter and fulfilled in the spirit; for example, the passover, priesthood, etc. They continue in their higher fulfillments like the sacrificial lambs, fulfilled, while superseded, by the Lamb slain once for all. Canaan is too small for Abraham's seed: it was theirs for a time, but such territorial occupancy was only a type of infinitely greater possessions in the spiritual Canaan of earth and heaven into which entrance and possession are granted because of covenant faith.

S. Lewis B. Speare.

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON SODOM.

GENESIS 18: 22–33.

"And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom."

THE men spoken of here are the three angels who appeared to Abraham one day as he sat in his tent door. After the manner of the East he welcomes them and insists that they partake of his hospitality.

The purpose of their visit was twofold: to inform Abraham of the birth of Isaac; also that God intended to destroy Sodom. One message carried joy, the other sorrow. Hope and anxiety were stirred together. The hope of a child was prevented from becoming extravagant by the thought of coming woe upon the city, and the dread of the impending doom of the city was tempered by the consolation of a coming heir. The law of compensation was here illustrated. This revelation of God's purpose and its effect upon Abraham furnishes us a suitable theme for consideration. For one thing it teaches: —

I. *A proper scope for prayer.*

We are taught that prayer is to be offered for cities, races, nations; such prayer is called intercession. It recognizes God's willingness to confer his blessings upon masses of men in their collective capacity. It is the most unselfish prayer, and it is perhaps true that the children of God do not recognize its value as they ought. We are apt to doubt its efficiency. The fact that a given body of people, like a state or race, are not in the least concerned in their own behalf; that the evils of their national life are so firmly intrenched that they willingly

submit themselves to their degradation and sin are serious obstacles to our praying for them — the probability of reform seems so remote and our own ability to inspire any effort to self-help so feeble that our prayers lack fervor and persistency. But this incident suggests the power which the Church of God has for doing a vast amount of good by intercession. We see that we may expect to accomplish results to which we may make no other contribution but our prayers. If we examine our prayers, we shall observe that they are confined to a narrow range of objects. They are mostly occupied with our personal sins and infirmities. They are petitions for individual growth, or else they are petitions for those interests with which we are intimately connected, such as our business, family, neighborhood, or church. In the missionary concert we cannot help noticing this poverty of desire when Christians pray for the heathen. The prayers lack point, intensity, a wide outlook, and an exact appreciation of the evil at hand. They reveal the lack of a habit of intercession in those who pray.

Abraham's experience with God in this matter reveals God's willingness to accept, hear, and answer intercessory prayer. We may assume his willingness to bless peoples and nations. From this incident we also learn: —

II. *Certain spiritual elements in true intercession.*

For one thing there will be a profound conviction of the *righteousness of the cause* for which prayer is made. When the Lord revealed his purpose to Abraham he replied, "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked. . . . shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Here are the first questionings of divine justice. Abraham knows nothing of justice except as it is revealed in his own heart, and he does not hesitate to measure God's justice by his own. On the ground of that sense

of righteousness within his own soul he boldly makes his request. He holds it up before God as a rule for divine action. Was he too presumptuous? Will God thunder back the reply that the two ideas of justice are totally unlike and not to be compared? Does he rebuke his servant for impiety in daring to think that God is like man?

Here was the grand opportunity for God to correct Abraham. But he did not. On the contrary he accepted Abraham's standard of justice as his own for this particular case, and promised he would not include the righteous with the wicked. Abraham said, "It is not right to destroy the good people of Sodom, provided they are there with the sinners." God replied, "I will not do it." This convinced Abraham that he was right in his intercession, and the discovery of this agreement between God and himself inspires him with greater pertinacity. He knows he is right and he prays with greater boldness. It is wonderful to see how his faith rises as his conviction of the justice of his plea strengthens. He is emboldened to ask harder things of the Lord. It is this sense of right that has buoyed up every great worker and every reformer and made him indefatigable in action and persistent in prayer against the great odds presented by the accumulated sins of men. Were it not that their cause was just, they had not been stirred to such exertion. It is justice of liberty as against injustice of slavery; of freedom as against that of oppression; of law as against lawlessness; of sobriety against intemperance; of political purity as against corruption, — that furnishes the Christian citizen sufficient warrant for prayer in behalf of his state or nation. God is on his side. God is trying to destroy the evils against which he is fighting. We may appeal to the justice of God as well as his grace to aid us in securing lasting benefits for mankind.

Besides this there is also the element of *sacrifice* in all true intercession. Why had not Lot been moved to plead for Sodom as well as Abraham? It was Lot's home; its citizens were his neighbors and business associates. For the reason that Lot was in Sodom for a selfish purpose. He was there to make money; and his self-interest blinded him to the moral condition of its inhabitants. The Lord makes no revelations to Lot. But Abraham, on the contrary, had endangered his life and that of his soldiers on one occasion to save Sodom. When enemies came up against her he had gathered his forces together and gone out to battle in her defense. When she was in captivity he had rescued her, and it was his sympathy for the people over whom he had established a sort of protectorate that moved him to pray in their behalf, now that a more terrible calamity threatened them. Sodom stood for his generosity and self-sacrifice. Into that city he had cast something of his own life; hence his interest and anxiety. And here is suggested the real secret of true intercession. It is our self-sacrifice for those who are in need that will give power to our plea. It is this which makes us constant at the throne of grace. There is a great deal of intercession which is very unlike that of Abraham in that it lacks a real appreciation of the needs of those for whom we intercede. The Bible and common sense bid us pray, with the Spirit and with the *understanding;* but we often pray for people we do not know and have no real interest in. We may not be able to present their case intelligently at the throne of grace. It is not the effectual fervent prayer of an anxious man. "Not so did Abraham pray; he prayed for those he knew and fought for." The mother who has toiled and sacrificed for her child will be the child's most effective intercessor with God. The statesman or soldier who has thrown his life into the country's extremity will understand best what

prayer in her behalf means. The missionary, having expended his energies among a heathen people to whom he ministers, is the best qualified to carry them to God in prayer. Paul had a great burden of longing that the churches might grow up into Christ because he had founded them and gave them direction. Christ was best fitted of all to pray for the world because he had given up heaven and glory to save the world. Intercession is founded on love.

We cannot help noticing, also, one other feature of true intercession, and that is *humility*. Abraham said, "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." His boldness and pertinacity are tempered with humility. He recognizes the supreme will and majesty of God. True humility has a holy boldness, and a powerful faith is humble. Though we know we have a right to enter the presence of God and ask large things of him, yet we are always conscious of our utter dependence on his will, so that our prayer never becomes a demand.

This incident also suggests: —

III. *The value to the world of the children of God.*

If five righteous men had been found in Sodom, the city would have been saved. What a testimony as to the place the child of God occupies in the sinful world! The world does not recognize the many blessings coming to it, because and for the sake of the few who are trying to serve God. The few shield the many from God's righteous anger. In a very real and practical way Christians are the salt of the earth. Every community is richer for every high-minded, upright person in it. One humble Christian sailor in a ship's crew may ensure the safety of the vessel. One Christian child in a godless family may hold the family together, and be the link that binds it to God. God recognizes the value of good men.

Christ always gave credit for every bit of goodness he found in men. He saw the faults of his disciples and yet he calls them the salt of the earth.

Looking at the Church of Christ from one standpoint it reveals sad delinquencies and obvious imperfections; its humanity is painfully apparent; but looking at it from another point of view, its vast power, its worth, its pervasive influence are beyond the power to conceive. God looks upon the sinful world, with its dark masses of corruption, through the medium of the souls who are serving him. Through them does he behold sinners. He sees his children first. Too much perhaps do we let our thoughts dwell on the evil influence of the world upon the Church. Too much may we lament its inroads upon our spiritual lives — religious living may seem to be so ineffectual and negative. But ought we not occasionally to look at the other side and be inspired at the curative force a few pure souls may have amid a world of corruption? Never again will the poverty of the world in righteous men be so great as existed in Sodom. Never again will the world be able to house all its saints in an ark, as Noah did. The influence of sainthood is rapidly broadening. The world is coming to see its indebtedness to piety. Therefore we can take courage and throw all our ardor into holy living, trusting to its inherent power to subdue sin and purify the world. Never again should we be discouraged at the feebleness of the Church of Christ.

One other suggestion offers itself, and that is: —

IV. *As to the awful nature of divine wrath when once it is aroused.* Sodom was far gone in sin not to have five righteous men in it. God saw the wickedness — that it was very great. The city was a veritable plague spot. Vileness, corruption filled it from end to end, and spread out from it like miasm. Its cup of sin was full, and only then did the wrath of God descend upon it. There was

no leaven of goodness in the city to leaven it, so he wiped it out of existence. When once the punishment began there was no interruption to the awful work till it had completely ended. The cries and groans of the citizens came too late. God's fury stayed not.

Here is an instance where punishment was not disciplinary. It did not seek to benefit the Sodomites. These poor souls perished utterly and absolutely. There seemed also to be no direct connection between their evil and the destruction that came upon them. If their courses of sin had so weakened them that they were not able to resist a foe and were slaughtered by an army; if they became quarrelsome among themselves and destroyed each other in internecine warfare; if they became physically enfeebled by sinful indulgences, so that disease had found them easy prey and carried them away, — we could then have seen a direct relation between their corruption and their terrible fate; but fire from heaven indicated the direct action of God — a divine purpose to deal directly with sin. It is well to remember this in these days, when we are told that the only punishment of sin is the natural consequence of our wrongdoing. The fate of Sodom reveals the direct intervention of heaven. God watches the sin of men, and has a punishment for it other and more terrible than the natural consequences of their wrongdoing.

But the calamity was designed to have a salutary effect upon Abraham and his posterity. They were thus early taught that if they were to receive special favor from God, they must be obedient to divine law. If they were to possess a land, and become mighty on the earth in the future, they could not indulge in such loose living as they had just witnessed. They received a most impressive lesson of God's hatred of transgressions. They learned that there was a time when prayer had no avail

even with a merciful God. They were to learn also the importance of keeping the cities pure which they might build in the future — that evil is aggravated and runs riot where people are herded together within narrow confines.

A stern lesson was also taught Lot, for in the destruction of Sodom he beheld the fruits of his self-seeking swept away in a few hours. Nothing remained of all the wealth he had so laboriously gained. He had imperiled his own soul and those of his family to amass a fortune, and now he had nothing to show for it. He had lived for this world and lost all. What befell Lot will also happen to all who, like him, are seeking merely earthly good. Some day the vanity of their gains will be felt. Let us hope it will not be too late.

Edward Sampson Tead.

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

GENESIS 22: 1–13.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham," etc.

I. *The command.* The difficulties involved in this divine command to offer Isaac have been easily overcome by some students by their denial of the fact. Either the voice was not from God or it was misunderstood. But it is impossible with any reverence for the record thus to dismiss the case. On its face it asserts a divine command, understood and obeyed, and then a countermand in which the spirit of obedience was accepted and a less painful duty substituted in place of that originally imposed. Let us put ourselves back so far as we can into that early time and see what this trial meant to the man who was most concerned in it.

We need to remember first of all that Abraham was tested by the standards of his day and not of ours. The rite of sacrifice was evidently one of the earliest forms of worship. It appears with the first men born into the world, a thank-offering or a sin-offering, or both combined. There is no intimation in the Bible that it was commanded or its duty revealed before Abraham's time; no explanation of its meaning had been given in foregoing revelations, so far as we can tell. "Sacrifice is recorded as having been offered at the very gate of Eden, but who or what prompted it we are not told, and though inferences have been drawn as to its divine appointment, they are only inferences. The fact of its being offered is recognized, but it is recognized as a fact which arose beyond the sphere of revelation. It is no more an exclu-

sively biblical fact than is the moral law."[1] Abraham was accustomed to the idea and practice of it, but it was a traditional form of worship with him as with those who had gone before him. The only recorded reference to it in his previous life was in the ordering of the animals which were to be slain and divided as a covenant seal of the promise of a seed and of a land. Sacrifice as an offering of a life was a familiar thought to the patriarch.

Nor was the idea of the sacrifice of a human life startling and revolting to his moral sense as it is to ours: for it was the custom of all the nations around, even of that from which he had just been called out that he might learn and know a better way. The moral standards of every age are largely set by custom. Human life has not always been invested with the sacredness with which it is regarded in our day. Nor indeed now is it held of much account in some of the barbarous, or even civilized, nations of the East. To Abraham's age the sacrifice to the deities of a life was held to be its most sacred use. We have no record of any teaching up to this hour by which his view of it should have been largely different from that of his contemporaries.

Nor is there any reason to believe that Abraham mistook the meaning of the voice from heaven, that God intended by this command a moral sacrifice, the dedication of this son of promise to God in a spiritual sense. There is no suggestion of this in the staying of the uplifted hand; no word of reproof or correction. Only approval is given to the man of faith, as a substitute is provided for the designated victim. If Abraham had misinterpreted the Lord's command, so that when he bade him dedicate the life of his only son to the service of God he proceeded to devote that life to a bloody death, surely he would have been corrected as well as set right.

[1] The Bible: its Revelation, Inspiration, and Evidence. By John Robson, D.D.

It seems evident then that this was, as the record says, a trial of Abraham's faith. A trial, not for God's information as to the real character of this called man, but a bringing his inward life and motive to the test of outward action, that it might be manifest to others, and especially to Abraham himself. The simple question to him was whether he should obey the God whose call he had followed from his father's house and land, as those who trusted other gods obeyed them. A man is greatly strengthened when he has borne such a test well; when he has proved his faith by some act of self-denial or self-sacrifice and knows that he did not weaken at the supreme testing moment. "The proof of faith worketh patience," and it is worth much to have that patience and to know that it is ours.

So it has seemed good to God in every age to put his chosen servants to the proof, to refine his silver in the fire, to certify them to themselves and to the world as truly his. Thus he brought Abraham up to the severest test of devotion according to the standards of the age.

II. *The obedience.* How well that ancient father stood the test the story tells in simple words. The very simplicity of it all is most touching. Abraham rises early in the morning, — no word is told us of the sleepless night, — prepares the wood, and takes Isaac with him to the place of which God had told him. He leaves his servants and goes on alone, he and the lad. He lays the wood in order and lays his son — apparently his unresisting son — upon it. He takes the knife in his hand and raises his arm to strike the fatal blow.

There is no account given of Abraham's agonized heart, no census of his tears or sighs. Perhaps he did not feel as keenly as a father of our day would, so many centuries later. But he could not have failed to be shaken and distressed at the deed he was ordered to do. He could not have forgotten the promise that centered on this son

and that the descending of that uplifted arm would bring the frustration of it all.

The emphasis which the story lays is not upon the excess or lack of emotion which accompanied it, but simply on the fact of a prompt and exact obedience to the heavenly voice and vision. He stood the test — the most searching that could be applied; whatever else was true or not about it, he obeyed Jehovah as faithfully as any worshiper of idols obeyed what was understood to be the command of his god. It was the obedience which was accepted, and the prophet's saying emphasized in anticipation, "To obey is better than sacrifice." So repeatedly the assurance is given him of the future blessings upon his seed and upon the world through them, and repeatedly he is assured that it is because he has obeyed God's voice.

That is what is asked of any child of God in all the ages. Obedience is not a conspicuous virtue, not a grand acquirement — but it is not a virtue which belongs to slaves. It is rather the mark of sonship.

But some one says — many perhaps — Shall we then obey God, or what we think to be the command of God, whatever it may be? whether it be according to the standards of morality right or wrong? If God should bid a man to murder or to steal, should he do it on that authority? We answer, first, that one must be absolutely sure that it is a divine command, and the test is given to us in the Bible and for a similar purpose. "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them."

Abraham had no written book of revelation to appeal to. While there is doubtless an absolute standard of morality, it is largely among men a conventional matter. The command to Abraham, as has been said, did not shock his moral sense as it would ours. That father who a few years ago obeyed what was to him a call of God to

sacrifice his child was held amenable to civil law. It would have been a crime if it had not been insanity. The writer knew a man a few years ago who did a most dishonest thing, and being confronted with it said that he had made it a subject of prayer and seemed to be permitted to do it. In this last case it was doubtless more rascality than insanity. But the rule for us is that with a law of divine origin written or otherwise and of general human acceptance, no man can obey a voice which is inconsistent with it, or which seeks to substitute a lower law for it. The command to Abraham did not violate his conscience, though it must have violently opposed his feeling. God will ask us to do nothing and to believe nothing that will violate ours.

But any plain command of God or any clear requirement of duty demands of us absolute and prompt obedience. The question is not how hard it is, but how right it is. Any renunciation of self or of pleasure; any devotement of time or strength or means; any cross-bearing or self-sacrifice for the good of others which comes to us as a divine call, — if we would be worthy children of God, nay, if we would even be worthy children of Abraham, we will render with cheerful submission.

Three times in this brief selection from the book of Genesis Abraham answers, "Here am I" — twice to the divine paternal voice, once to the human filial call. A noble motto it is for any one. To be always in one's place, always attent to any call, divine or human, ready to obey or to explain — what higher thought of duty can we have?

III. *The divine purpose.* It was evidently first of all to develop Abraham's faith, bringing it, through the test of obedience, to his own consciousness. But the purpose of God as to what he desired Abraham to do, and what he intended to accomplish by it, is to be seen not from his first command to the patriarch, but by that which he

finally forbade him to do. The sacrifice was indeed most important, so far as the character of Abraham is concerned; but the forbidding to sacrifice is far more so, so far as the character of God is concerned and so far as the religious life of Israel through all its future history is concerned. Indeed, the aged father showed his obedience as well in staying his hand as in raising it.

Human sacrifice, as has been said, was common among all the polytheistic nations. Abraham is proved as obedient as they even by this severest test, and then Jehovah forbids him to slay his son. The hand of the father is stayed, and from that time his descendants and the nation into which they grew were as distinguished from the nations about them by their abstinence from human sacrifice as by their worship of one God, and that without the medium of graven images. Only once in all the history of the Jewish race is such a sacrifice suggested — in the case of Jephthah and his daughter, and there is grave doubt whether that was intended to be suggested or whether it was the historical fact. The sacrifice of sons or daughters is distinctly forbidden in the Levitical law and denounced with horror by the prophets.

We are not to judge of the divine purpose always by the divine command. What God bids it is evidently the duty of his people to undertake, even if it be in their thought an evident impossibility — what he purposes to do he does not always tell them in advance. What substitute he has at hand for the required sacrifice at the last moment we cannot tell. He bids them "go forward" into the Jordan; the waters only make way for them as their feet touch the brink. He bids the prophet Jonah proclaim destruction to Nineveh, but stays his own hand when the people turn to him, in this showing his real purpose toward them. Only we may be sure that all his commandments are for our good always, and that all his

purposes are formed in love and are for the building up of his kingdom of righteousness and peace. Let us always judge of his purpose to do, by looking at what he has done.

IV. *The typical use of this story.* This sacrifice of his son in the purpose of his father, and this substitution of a divinely appointed victim, as well as the supposed consent of the youthful Isaac to the deed, have been pressed into service all through the Christian ages as not illustrations only, but as divinely intended types of the great sacrifice of the Son of God in its willingness, in its sonship, and in its substitution.

But the unresisting acquiescence of Isaac is assumed; it is not stated in the record. The final victim for the sacrifice was caught in the bushes and could not escape. The substitutional idea was common to all sacrifice; but it was a less valuable life for one more worthy. The sonship suggests a thought not commonly pressed by those who claim the power to give a Christian meaning to Scriptures which do not claim it — the sacrifice by the father rather than to him.

But the Bible itself does not thus use this event. It is not given us as a type of the great sacrifice of Christ, but of the obedience which becomes all who claim to be children of God. Abraham is the father of the faithful. It was his glory that he believed and that he obeyed, and in this he is continually set before us as an example. He believed when God seemed to be contradicting his own word. He obeyed when every instinct of fatherhood must have revolted and even his faith have led him to doubt. So he is set before us not as an illustration of God's love or of Christ's sacrifice, but of that obedience which should prove our faith sincere.

We shall be wise not to be wise above what is written. If we learn the lesson of Abraham's faith, we shall be wise indeed.

George M. Boynton.

SELLING THE BIRTHRIGHT.

GENESIS 25 : 27–34.

"The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment."

ESAU and Jacob — two boys. They were different from each other; boys always are. One was hairy, the other was not. One loved a life in tents, the other loved a life lived in the open field. Boys of the same parents can never be alike. "Now Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob." So it often is. With such facts to start with, interesting developments are certain.

Jacob came into the world grasping Esau's heel. In the Scripture before us he is grasping Esau's throat. A man often becomes more pronouncedly himself as life advances. The boys, it is said, struggled together while yet in their mother's womb. This prenatal conflict was prophetic of much that followed. Jacob could never forgive Esau for coming into the world ahead of him. It is the man who is just a little ahead of us who excites our envy and who is always in our way. His holding Esau's heel was significant. It was a revelation of his disposition. Disposition is often fashioned before the man is born. The man Jacob that wrests from Esau his birthright is only an enlarged edition of the baby that held on to Esau's heel. The child is father of the man. It is difficult to get away from what we were at birth.

From the beginning there was something of the highwayman in Jacob's make-up, and in the episode of the mess of pottage we see him at his worst. To appreciate fully Jacob's meanness, we must consider Esau's need. Esau was a cunning hunter, but the time came when he

could get no game. Why, we do not know. Some have supposed it was a time of famine. It may have been. At any rate the skill of Esau was powerless to procure him food. After long and fruitless efforts he was faint. His strength of body was gone; so also was his strength of soul. He felt himself at the point of death. Even precious things grew valueless in his eyes. He was in need, but he had a brother. His brother had the very thing which Esau's need cried out for. "Feed me, I pray thee, . . . for I am faint," was the pleading cry of the famished hunter; and the unbrotherly answer came, "Sell me this day thy birthright."

Sell! That is a great word in Jewish history. As one hears Jacob saying, "Sell me this day thy birthright," the thought runs forward across the spaces of a thousand years to catch the accents of another Jew eager to complete a bargain — "What will you give me that I betray him unto you?" We get a taste of Judas and of Shylock in this sharp-witted, calculating trafficker whose rascality is recorded for our admonition.

Esau asks for a gift, but Jacob knows nothing of the divine art of giving. His great word is Sell. His eyes are open for bargains. He insists on large per cents. Note his cold-blooded proposition: "Sell me this day thy birthright." He will not buy on narrow margins. Small profits are an abomination unto him. He does not ask for the equivalent of his pottage, but for that which transcends earthly values — his brother's birthright. His brother is down. Over his prostrate body Jacob says: "Sell me!" Some men are never bold until their brother's strength is gone. Esau is in Jacob's power, and Jacob demands the birthright. Many a man never reveals his true self until he gets another at his mercy. Esau is beside himself with hunger and is in no mood to make an equitable contract; Jacob feels that his chance has come

and darts at once for his soul's desire — the birthright of his brother. It is an infamous transaction — Jacob's bargain with hungry Esau.

But notwithstanding the execration which noble hearts in every age have felt for this unscrupulous act of scheming Jacob, there are still men ready to follow in his footsteps. It is true, as the Master says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," but many men do not know it. Men there are to-day who will not give. They only sell. They see neither God nor man, but only bargains. They never sell except at enormous profits. They lie in wait until calamity overtakes their neighbors and then pounce down upon them, like Jacob on his brother: "Sell me this day thy birthright." Another's distress is the open door through which many a man has pushed his way into a prosperity which has damned his soul. Jacob's descendants are numerous; like the poor, they are always with us. In every man who to-day demands enormous per cents of men in their temporary distresses, or who levies outrageous interest upon the poor for articles of furniture or clothing which they have been obliged to buy, or who pays girl clerks and sewing women half prices, because women are weak and men are strong, or who takes advantage of the widow or the orphan or the friendless or the poor in any one of the ten thousand ways which the wicked heart of man has cunningly devised; in every saloonist who robs men of manhood for money; in every shark who preys upon the small and weak; in every genteel highwayman who extorts under the forms of trade unjust tribute from helpless need, — we catch a glimpse of the devil that was in Jacob the day he said to his needy brother, "Sell me this day thy birthright."

But it is not the wickedness of Jacob so much as the foolishness of Esau that has caught and chained the world's attention in this simple, ancient story. The man

who tells the story is evidently most impressed by the recklessness of Esau. He closes, not by saying, "Thus did Jacob cheat his brother," but, "So Esau despised his birthright." He makes no excuses for the wily and sharp-dealing Jacob. He tells the story without a syllable of palliation, but when he reaches the end the one fact which lingers in his memory and which he wishes to impress most strongly on the minds of those who read his story is, "So Esau despised his birthright."

The writer knew more of Esau than he tells us in these few verses. The subsequent career of Esau was in his mind, and this larger knowledge shaped the telling of the story of the selling of the birthright. Defective as was the character of Jacob, he was superior in manhood to Esau. The later history of the two men makes this fact plain. There is probably more in these words, "a cunning hunter," and "a man of the field," than we at first are likely to discern. These expressions hint of a wild and reckless nature which would not submit to the restraints of patriarchal life, but which found delight in the roving expeditions of the heathen tribes by which Isaac was surrounded. We cannot be certain from the Scripture before us — although we suspect it — that this free life had brought him into the companionship of men who had no sympathy with the traditions and customs that had come down to Isaac, and it is not unlikely that this companionship with outside people had paved the way for Esau's willingness to barter away his birthright. It is not at all improbable that before Esau's body grew weak from lack of food his appreciation of the family privileges which belonged to him as the firstborn son had been undermined by associations of which our record only hints.

The writer, moreover, had a keener sense than we have of the value of Esau's birthright. What privileges it carried with it we cannot fully say. Among many tribes

in early times the eldest son of a ruling chief became on his father's death the chieftain of the tribe, and, as in those early days Church and State were one, the chieftain was priest as well as prince. Among the sons of Abraham the firstborn son must have had a unique preëminence, owing to the spiritual privileges which had been promised to the father of the faithful. Just what these blessings were to be men did not clearly understand, but that some mighty and special favors from the Almighty were to come to Abraham's descendants was no doubt sufficient to inspire a reverent expectation and to surround with a new glory the inheritance of the firstborn son. It was not simply earthly power and wealth which were involved in the Hebrew birthright, but immeasurable spiritual riches which gave the firstborn Hebrew son a dignity which any man well might covet. The birthright was a possession the worth of which could not be expressed. That a descendant of Abraham should lightly esteem his birthright was to the pious Hebrew a sin unpardonable. The one man who was foolish enough to sell his birthright became thereby immortal in Hebrew history, and the story of his infamy became a part of the tradition which fathers through succeeding generations repeated to their children. This tradition along with others is recorded in the book of Genesis by a writer who appreciates the privileges of the people of God and who writes not only with the rich memories of hundreds of years of history in his mind, but with his heart aglow with the hope of national triumphs yet to come. The awful fact to him was not that Jacob had been unbrotherly to his brother, but that Esau had despised his birthright.

And men in every age have sympathized with the writer, and have gathered lessons, not from the cupidity of Jacob, but from Esau's woful blunder. We do not feel our danger of becoming Jacob, but we know from per-

sonal experience that it is easy to be Esau. We linger longest over the experience of the hungry hunter, because we feel he is most like ourselves. We too have despised our birthright, and have sold it for things cheaper than a mess of pottage. The fullness of the blessings of our birthright as sons of God we do not appreciate or fully know. They are vague and distant, and in our times of hunger we forget the birthright and grasp the pottage. And in every hour of hunger the devil is sure to have some Jacob near us ready to complete a bargain which will leave us robbed, humiliated men. If every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, there is ample evidence of inspiration in this story of Esau's folly.

And first of all, when we are tired let us be careful. Esau was faint. A weary Esau is in special danger of bartering away his birthright. It is when we are fagged and jaded that Satan presses with special vehemence bargains which will leave us poor. The light book upon which in our strong hours we would be unwilling to waste our time appeals to us with peculiar importunity when the body is exhausted; and the glass of wine which the strong man does not crave has bewitching fascination for the man whose work has worn him out. The devil is always near us, especially when we are faint. There is divine wisdom in Paul's oft-repeated exhortation, "Be strong! be strong! be strong!"

And when we are discouraged let us be careful. Esau was discouraged. His cunning for once had failed. A discouraged Esau is easily entrapped. It is when we are humiliated by failure and sick at heart because our efforts have failed to bring forth fruit that the soul is in danger of surrendering its highest possessions. Many a man in an hour of depression has given up a work to which he

had promised God he would devote his life. Many a woman because she has failed once or twice in the line of duty has gone back and no more followed Jesus. Despondency is a trap in which the devil catches men. Let us be careful what we say and what we do when we have the blues. Thousands there are who, having once entered upon the spiritual life, have thrown away in a moment of gloom their purpose and their hope, and to-day they sit with bitter recollections outside of the city of God. Let us keep away from pottage when disheartened and cast down.

And when we are hungry let us be careful. Esau was hungry. A hungry Esau is ravenous for pottage. It is when appetite grows keen and gnaws and when passion cries out for gratification that the soul must be on its guard, for it is then that ten thousand foes arise. Hunger is voracious and gulps down the present forgetful of the future. Eating to-day and suffering to-morrow — this is the biography of every Esau. The satisfaction of a moment may fill many a year with keen agonies of remorse. The ecstasy, however sweet, which leaves a sting behind it is a mess of pottage dearly bought. It is an awful price to pay for a passing pleasure — the dignity and purity of manhood. Better die of hunger than barter character for meat.

When we are in doubt let us be careful. Esau was in doubt. "What profit," said he, "shall the birthright do to me?" A doubting Esau finds it easy to let his birthright go. There are times when for all of us the windows of the soul are closed. There are days when doubting comes as natural as breathing. We are blinded by the glare of material torches, and forget the heavenly vision. The earthly noises are loud and many; the celestial voices are few and faint. So it was with Esau. The promise of the holy land was vague to him; the promise of the Mes-

siah was vaguer still. And vague to us at times are the greatest promises which stand recorded for our comfort. God's promises are true, of course, but the fact remains that there is for a man at certain times a satisfaction in a mess of pottage which even God's promises cannot give. In these seasons of spiritual deadness, when the tyranny of the senses becomes almost supreme, there is nothing to do but "watch and pray."

The spirit is often willing when the flesh is weak. The flesh grows weary. The flesh becomes hungry. The flesh creeps like a film over the eyes of the soul. The flesh dulls our sense of spiritual things. The outside of Esau was like an animal. He allowed the inside to become animal too. His sin may easily be ours. There is no salvation for any of us except that which comes from looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith, who overcame the tempter both in the wilderness and in the garden, and whose earthly life was an exposition and illustration of the words which he taught the people, "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment."

Charles E. Jefferson.

JACOB AT BETH-EL.

GENESIS 28: 10–22.

"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran," etc.

THIS whole paragraph, giving an account of Jacob and his journey and his vision and his vow, sums itself up and comes to a focus in a single clause of the sixteenth verse, as follows: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Let us think about this great truth.

So long as there is a heaven stretched out over the earth, so long as the sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, the tides ebb and flow, man, because he is man, will continue to think and dream and talk of God. So long as heart remains heart and brain remains brain great poets will sing: —

> God 's in his heaven —
> All 's right with the world.

Man without God is left without right; half without whole; shadow without substance; phenomena without reality; flesh without spirit; creature without Creator; a tale full of sound and fury signifying nothing. The universe without God is a riddle which has no answer; a middle with neither beginning nor end; neither Alpha nor Omega. The scientist or the philosopher, when robbed of God or when he concludes that there is no need of the hypothesis of God, still continues to use the old words which will not die and speaks of "power that makes for righteousness," "the stream of tendency," "sweetness and light," "the absolute."

Man cannot get on without God. He cannot think

without implying God, or build up his scientific theories and schemes without postulating God. There must be a foundation. We work back through things that seem, to things that are. Something is behind and underneath. The world and all things therein rest on that foundation.

You look up to the stars, beyond Orion and Arcturus, and ask, What is beyond the stars? What is in highest, deepest space? What is everywhere? The divinest man who ever lived tells us that "Being" is everywhere; that this Being is conscious being; that this Being knows us and makes us know him; loves us and makes us love him; that he is "our Father." Without God there is only chaos. Without God there is no connection in things: there is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe. All is luck and chance. Things seen are only appearance, phenomena with no reality or substance behind them. The stars may chime in their courses, but we cannot tell what they chime, and do not know what is piped or harped. There is no law why one appearance might not as well be another appearance. Indeed there is no certainty that appearances or phenomena are anything more than mental delusions, curious exhalations from our brains, and our brains exhalations from yeasty matter. We are such stuff as dreams are made of. We are reduced to nothing.

> A pagan, kissing for a step of Pan,
> The wild goat's hoof-print on the loamy down,
> Exceeds our modern thinker, who turns back
> The strata — granite, limestone, coal, and clay,
> Concluding coldly with, — "Here's law! Where's God?"

Two things in the world need no proof — that the sun shines and that God is. They not only need no proof, but can have no proof. There is no proof, in terms of logic, that the sun shines or that God is. We cannot prove sunshine, but we can feel or experience sunshine; and we cannot prove God, but we can feel or experience

God. Man is able to doubt whether God is, because he is able to doubt anything. There are no limits to his capacity in that direction. It is a very striking fact, and affords confirmation strong as holy writ of man's ability to doubt, that men have actually doubted the shining of the sun; they have said there is no shining of the sun; no sun to shine; no moon, no stars, no world outside of ourselves; that there is nothing to be seen or heard, and that the things apparently seen or heard are mists rising from the soul, exhalations from man himself, shadows cast by his own spirit; and that man is like a stereopticon, throwing out pictures from himself, and then believing the pictures to be real. To this folly false philosophy or thinking has come. Men have been "wise fools."

Because we know a little, or think we do, about chemistry and electricity and biology, we doubt God. Because we have learned something about matter, we doubt spirit. Because we have heard the lower voices which speak to us in heat, light, dynamic force, and vital energy, we doubt the higher voices, which speak to us in faith, hope, love, and spirit. This kind of doubt is like a periodical epidemic, which appears from time to time in different ages of the world, and prevails extensively. It is a sort of mental grippe. After a while the paroxysm passes off, the mists rise, the gases and fogs disappear, the mental sky clears, and the sun shines. Then again men believe in God.

Dr. Mulford, in his Republic of God, says: "The being of God is the precedent and the postulate of the thought of God." Because God is, therefore we can think about him. The world is, therefore we can think about it. He says: "Man is conscious of the being of the external world, and lives and acts in this consciousness, and the being of the external world so comes to be apprehended by him. And, further, man is conscious of the being of

God, and lives and acts in this consciousness, and the reality of the being of God so comes to him." He says again: "There is no demonstration of the being of God. It is itself the principle of demonstration. In every mode of demonstration whose object is to arrive at it, it is assumed. It can form no term in the formulas of logic. It is not a truth which can be accounted among the achievements of human thought. There can be no demonstration of the being of God by man; there may be the manifestation of God to man."

This is what happened to Jacob when he came to a certain place and tarried there all night. He became aware of God. Proof was not needed. There was a manifestation of God. It was a dream, and something more than a dream. He awaked out of sleep and said: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." His ignorance did not prevent God, and his knowledge did not produce God. He merely became aware of God, and said: "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Two secondary truths should be noticed here. The first is that when man meets with God all things take on new meaning. The lonely place was forgotten, and Jacob saw only steps up to heaven, angels ascending and descending, with the Lord himself standing and calling. The wilderness became the gate of heaven. When there is a new heaven and a new earth it is not because the celestial scenery has been skillfully shifted by invisible hands, but because the eyes of some beholder have been opened. The change is in the man, not in the sky. The rights which any man has on the earth and in the earth are rights in God. Man possesses nothing apart from God. His title to the earth and to life and to heaven is in God. "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give

it, and to thy seed." Life is a lease from God. The earth is a trust from God. Jacob was so taught.

The other secondary truth is that when man meets with God he is reconstructed; life finds a new center and a new solution. All things are measured by a different standard. No doubt Jacob was selfish and crafty in saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me and feed me and clothe me and bring me back to my father's house in peace, I will set up a pillar and give a tenth." Most men would. The folly of man does not make void the goodness of God. There is modern meanness as well as ancient meanness, and men still try to bargain with God. I have no wish to defend Jacob or make him out any better than he was. It is true, however, that God had promised to do all these things. It is true that God is the center and solution of man's life. It is God who keeps and feeds and brings home. We cannot do better than to accept his covenant, and set up our memorial.

Let us now return to the central primary truth — "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." We shall find that it breaks up into four coördinate truths, or truths of equal rank: —

First, God is found here, and not there. Jacob did not say, "God is in some other place; he is in heaven, or on the heights, or far off in space;" but he said, "He is in this place; how dreadful is this place!" The Greeks had certain oracles, but they were local. It was necessary to repair to Dodona or Delphi, where the oracle was.

The Mahometans journey to Mecca, Catholics to Rome, Presbyterians to Geneva, and Congregationalists to Plymouth; but place is nothing, and God is everything. God is everywhere. Jesus said: "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." Spirit has neither shape, size,

nor location. Love can live in a small house as well as in a large one. God is as likely to be found in the poor man's cottage as in the king's palace. Strictly speaking, we cannot say that God is more in one place than in another; that he is more here than he is there, or more there than here, because he is equally everywhere. He is in every corner of the earth. Spirit can meet with spirit. "Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

The point of contact is soul. It matters not about body. When soul touches soul, when love finds love and thought mingles with thought, then the Spirit of God has united with the spirit of man. There is no need of going a long distance to find God. He starts with us on every such journey. He clings to us like a garment. When we seek him he helps us to seek, and so seeks himself. Men have failed to find God because he is so near. He who would talk with God must stay at home. Any stone will do for a pillow, and the place will at once become venerable and sacred. How dear and soothing to man is this thought of God peopling the lonely place and making it the gate of heaven!

Again, God is found now and not then. Jacob did not say: "God was in this place long ago; he was in this place in the days of my grandfather Abraham, or in the days of my father Isaac;" but he said: "God is in this place now; he is here with me at this present moment, making this time, as well as this place, divine and heavenly."

We venerate the past and glorify the future. Other days seem holy and fortunate and favored compared with ours. As we collect old furniture, so we ape the manners of our fathers, and think God was nearer to them than he is to us. We load our shelves with ancient books, and borrow opinions, tastes, convictions, and prejudices from former generations. The present moment of time, how-

ever, is the supreme moment. Now is the day of salvation. All the past pours into the present moment, and all the future flows out of it. Other ages have been ages of ignorance, which God overlooked, but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent. This is the age of ages. It is the age of God. The windows of heaven are open. Divine voices sound through the air, vibrating on the souls of men.

I believe it is more wise and honorable to love the world as it now is than to love it as it was thousands of years ago. God has not deserted the race. He who fails to find him now, and at home, would have failed to find him when Jacob lived and where he slept.

Once more, God is to be found within and not without. There was no ladder in the wilderness where Jacob slept. He only dreamed of the ladder and the angels and the Lord standing and calling. Meeting with God is wholly a spiritual event. Only person can meet person. Only character can reflect character. Only love can answer love.

Every revelation is made by a spirit, to a spirit, in the spirit. John tells us that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The supreme message comes direct from the infinite Spirit. The heart of God must touch the heart of man. No messengers of flesh and blood will serve. The Comforter is God's voice within man. Christ said, He shall take of mine and show it unto you. The Spirit searches all things; yea, the deep things of God. The human spirit and the divine Spirit mingle. We can draw no line to separate them. The spiritual in man may become dulled and deadened, may be quenched and darkened, but needs only to come in contact with God in order to be quickened and made alive. When man becomes conscious of nearness to God, he becomes a living soul. Jesus said: "If a man love me, he will keep my word:

and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He prayed for all those who might believe on him, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us. . . . I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one."

The reason why some are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth; why they are feeling after God, if haply they may find him, and failing to do so, — is that they are seeking in the wrong part of themselves.

God dwells, not in man's logic, but in his love; not in an active brain, but in a simple, affectionate heart. Men by wisdom know not God. He is not found in philosophy, but in obedience. Jesus says to those who keep his commandments, "He abideth with you, and shall be in you." And Paul answers: "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

> For thou, within no walls confined,
> Inhabitest the humble mind;
> Such ever bring thee where they come,
> And going, take thee to their home.

There is time only to mention the fourth coördinate truth — that God is found in moral, and not in physical, presence. Although God is in physical life, he has never been found. No knife cuts deep enough to find God in the flesh. We meet with God only in moral and spiritual life. Love finds love. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Every stirring in the soul of a diviner life; every faintest aspiration after something finer and nobler; every lifting of weary eyes to the hills from whence cometh help, and every feeling of deep disappointment with ourselves is a touch of the divine soul upon the human soul, and is a sure proof that we have come to a certain

place in life, where, like Jacob, we see the ladder set up, the angels ascending and descending, the Lord standing and calling. It will be well with us if we, like Jacob, are able to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. . . . How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Edward Beecher Mason.

WINE A MOCKER.

PROVERBS 20: 1–7.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

You remember the fabled story of Circe, "whose charmed cup whoever tasted lost his upright shape, and downward fell into a groveling swine."

A beautiful face and form she had, but a fatal chalice she held. One after another the young men and maidens came to her, sipped from the sparkling cup, and were transformed into monsters, until whole communities were embruted by her hideous spell.

Now should this Circe come to Boston and begin to practice her art here, should our boys and girls, infatuated by her charms, be tempted to drink her potations, and return to their homes in the shape of the beasts which the prodigal kept, what horror would thrill the community! Fathers and mothers would rise with one voice and exclaim, "Put the enchantress away! Break her chalice! Prohibit her art!"

And yet, my friends, the Circean mocker is here. She has come to Boston and opened her black art in more than eight hundred saloons. She places her fatal wares in tempting array under the electric light. She hangs out her glittering sign and flaunts her license in our faces. She says to the great mass of respectable men and women, "What are you going to do about it? I have a right to ply my art upon the temptable, habit-ridden citizens of this city. I have a right to decoy your sons and brothers into my power, and transform them into things that maunder and stagger and grovel. I have a right to deso-

late your homes and fill your jails. You yourselves have given me this right." And we cannot answer her. We go about our business, but our boys and our young men and our old men enter Circe's open door, and come out again into our streets and back to their homes with visages changed and reason overthrown. Fathers and mothers look to see the boy that was. Wives look through streaming eyes to find their husbands. But all in vain. Their forms alone remain; the soul, the self, by foul enchanter's spell has been dethroned, and, cringing like a horrid thing beneath the sorcerer's wand, is lured to woe and death. The mothers weep, the fathers wring their hands, the wives, heartbroken, toil and cry and plead. Still Circe's fatal door we do not close. Her crime, the crime of crimes, unpunished goes.

We live in an age when the question of rights often stands before the question of duty. In our zeal to vindicate the rights of the individual we sometimes overlook our duty to the many. The man who exercises his right to drink freely from this Circean cup sins, not only against himself but against society.

For example, according to the almost unanimous testimony of physicians, he commits suicide. Last week when a foolhardy fellow made a bid for notoriety by jumping from the Brooklyn bridge, two policemen made a desperate effort to reach the jumping-off place in time to save him; and yet on that same day over a hundred thousand men in the great metropolis made a leap to a more certain death in the dramshops, and the world and the policemen did not quicken their steps to save them.

A man destroys his brain by drinking. Alcohol converts the golden bowl into a seething crucible of tissues; the delicate cells and fibers of which, subjected again and again to the corrosive fumes of the liquor, lose their ethereal qualities and finally become crass and dull.

A man ruins his nervous system by drinking. That wonderful apparatus, the delicate chords of which respond in a symphony of delight to the sights and sounds of the outer world, becomes an unstrung and rattling harp from whose flaccid strings come the dolorous strains of neuralgia and kindred ills.

The man who drinks shatters his whole constitution by goading the heart to overwork. The heart ordinarily lifts one hundred and sixteen tons a day. Four ounces of alcohol taken into the system will so increase its action as to make it lift fifteen tons more. This means a shortened life.

All these things put together bring in their train a procession of ills as long as the world's mortality list itself.

But the man who drinks is something more than a self-destroyer. He is in danger of doing more to desolate our homes and disrupt society than all other classes of evil-doers combined. He may be what the perverted image of God often becomes — a fiend incarnate. We were wild in our denunciations of the Chicago anarchists a few years ago. They were tried and condemned on the charge of killing a single policeman. But hardly a day passes in which some faithful officer of the law is not killed or maimed by the rum fiend. The drunkard's bottle contains a more fatal explosive than the bomb of a Fielding or a Parsons. It has destroyed more life and property than all the gunpowder, dynamite, and nitroglycerin which have ever been made. Judges, legislatures, public men, statisticians unite in asserting this. The verdict is clear. The jury do not disagree.

The man who drinks is wasting property at a fearful rate. If the man or men who started the recent conflagration in Mr. George W. Child's Ledger office in Philadelphia could be discovered, an indignant public would

visit upon them condign punishment; and yet all of the conflagrations of the past seven years have hardly destroyed as much property as the vats and distilleries of the liquor manufacturers. In that time more than one hundred and fifty-three million bushels of grain have been transmuted into strong drink. And what has the mocker given us in return for all this? An army of paupers, criminals, tramps, insane and bankrupt in purse and in character, and over two hundred thousand centers of moral and political corruption, socialism, and anarchy.

That liquor making and selling and drinking are the triple source of the gravest dangers which threaten our nation few candid observers will deny, and all but the vicious agree that the evil is one of such magnitude that it is a proper subject for legislation. The difference of opinion among the citizens who oppose the liquor traffic concerns the methods of dealing with it.

Shall the mocker acquire the right to practice her black art in a town by paying a moderate sum of money for the destruction which she makes? Or shall she go into any town in the state and set up as many establishments as she can afford at a thousand dollars apiece? Or shall she be utterly prohibited from selling her potations at all? Low license, High license, and No license: these are phrases over which there has been, and is destined to be, much heated controversy. If you will bear with me, I will give you two reasons why I think every good citizen should oppose the licensing of this black art in any form whatever.

My first reason is that license fails in practice. It does little or nothing toward restricting the rum traffic. Now I am not going to accuse a man of insincerity because he disagrees with me upon this subject. I prefer to think that he is an honest man, but that he does not see the facts as I do. These facts, I think, are troublesome things for an honest conscience to deal with.

What has high license really accomplished? Is it even half a loaf in the direction of reform? I am more and more convinced that it is a gilded device of the mocker to deceive the elect. I have yet to learn that it diminishes liquor selling or drinking. If it shuts up a basement groggery here and there, it transfers the groggery patronage to the gilded saloon and on the whole gives an air of respectability to the business. If the tippler cannot get his drink at Michael Poorman's cellar bar, he can get it just a block farther down town at the blazing corner saloon. The license that shuts up Michael's den helps to fill the saloon-keeper's money drawer. A certain hard drinker wanted to sign the pledge. He said he would if he could be allowed one glass a day. He wanted to let himself down easy. So he wrote his name. "Now," said his friend, "you must remember, Patrick, that you are to drink only one glass a day." Patrick remembered it and bought himself a tumbler that held a pint. That is high license. If it breaks the little tumblers, it turns the liquor into larger ones. Patrick will get his usual amount all the same.

I confess that I am somewhat surprised that so little has been done by the license system in restricting the liquor traffic. The figures are against it. About the only thing that can be said of it is that it has brought considerable money into the public treasury. As D. K. Locke well says, "It does not stop the traffic: it does not stop the infernal raid upon humanity which is filling jails and asylums and feeding the gallows."

My second reason is that license is wrong in principle. It is a prostitution of the sacred functions of government. It puts the seal of righteousness upon a devilish traffic. It pins the badge of respectability upon a business which makes sots and jail birds and murderers. While I am willing to work with those who disagree with me upon

this point, and will do what I can to make even a license law as effective as possible, I shall do it under protest against the law itself, for I believe such a law is morally wrong. A license to pursue the liquor traffic is a license to make inroads on almost every interest in life. It is a license to devastate our homes, corrupt our youth, and ruin the souls of men. It is giving a legal right to do a moral wrong.

It is not, as some argue, a mere tax. It is the granting of a privilege with an implied approval. It is the committal of the government to the sanction and protection of the evil which is gnawing at the very vitals of the people.

It is often urged as an objection to a no-license law that such a law will inevitably be broken. All laws are broken. They will be broken as long as human nature remains as it is; but for all that, law must stand as the formulated conscience of the community — the strong, chaste monitor ever pointing its finger of warning and rebuke to the evil-doer, ever reminding him by its inflexible righteousness of his own sad lack and need of reformation. Law in these enlightened days can neither connive nor compromise with evil.

Better that our city should make its liquor traffic disreputable by refusing to license it, even though the law should be broken in a thousand cases, than that she should sanction the traffic by granting a thousand licenses! The evil effects of violating a no-license law are no greater than those of violating a license law. License does not prevent law-breaking. The electric glare from the licensed saloon blinds the eyes of the average citizen to the existence of the kitchen saloons and cellar bar, but they flourish nevertheless. Under no license we shall have a set of law breakers who care very little about law of any kind. If they can break the law, they will do so and be

little concerned about the moral bearings of their violation. Under license we shall have this same class of people, but a part of them will feel that they are discriminated against by an unrighteous law, while the favored few, coddled under the very arm which smites their fellow saloon-keepers, will feel that law has been bought for money; while outside of both of these classes we shall have that great class of the youth and the young men of Boston who will be unconsciously educated in the doctrine that the liquor traffic is a legal and respectable business. So far as the moral effects are concerned, we had far better have no license. If it is to be practically free rum under either law, let us at least choose the law which is worthy of the name and which carries with it a moral influence.

My friends, we ought to think of these things, and thought should blossom into action. God will hold us responsible in no small measure for the young men who go down to death under the liquor power of this city. There are fearful contrasts before our eyes: luxury and penury, respectability and vice. Rum is daily making the contrast more striking and ominous. It is driving its separating wedge deeper and deeper. We have had license and we want no more of it. The majority of the people of Boston never wanted it. This is a case where a majority at the polls does not represent a majority of the people.

The wives, mothers, sisters, and intelligent minors of this city have opinions and convictions upon this subject which count for as much in the make-up of our society as those which are labeled with a ballot. The sentiment of these thousands has been utterly disregarded. It is time for the character of the city to assert itself; time that this fraternity of Diabolus, which battens on the tears of mothers and the blood of manhood, should feel the pressure of an uprising moral sentiment; time that the gilded

gateways through which our sons and brothers are passing to perdition should no longer have emblazoned upon them the seal of an enlightened municipality.

It is a fearful education for our children to pass by these Circean doors, to sit where I have sometimes seen them sitting, on the very steps of the saloon, listening to the ribald talk and witnessing the shameful scenes within. It is a disgrace to a city the great majority of whose citizens are respectable, orderly, and temperate, to a city that calls itself Christian. It is a disgrace to our churches, our homes, our characters; for we are members of one body, and when one member suffers all the other members suffer with it. We are living, not for time, but for eternity; and yet it is timely action that brings eternal blessedness.

Charles A. Dickinson.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

MARK 16: 1–8.

"And he saith unto them, Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified; he is risen," etc.

"HE is risen!" God sent an angel to say it first. Then a redeemed woman with feet winged by love flew from the dewy garden, crying, "He is risen!" Then a little band of ransomed men with heads crowned with flame rushed into the public square, shouting, "He is risen!" And then new-born souls caught up the cry, and all Jerusalem heard and Antioch and Alexandria and cultured Corinth and haughty Rome! The forests echoed it! The mountains told it! The stars sang it! The waves repeated it! Age has told to age the wondrous story, until at last, with ringing bells and pealing organs and chanting choirs, the tidings of a risen Christ belt the earth with glory and flood the world with joy.

As on Easter day we see Faith turn her radiant face toward the tomb where once Jesus lay, let us remember that these words, "He is risen," voice not legend, not myth, not tradition, but fact. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is one of the best-attested facts in history. In language clear and unmistakable, each statement bearing the impress of truthfulness, the evangelists bear witness to it. Paul adds his testimony and arrays beside his own that of the hundreds who saw and touched and talked with Jesus in his risen body. The angry billows of unbelief have flung themselves against this rock of fact but to be dashed back in baffled rage. Jew and Roman, Greek and barbarian have spent their strength

upon it. Nearly twenty centuries of sin have passed, and to-day that broken tomb in Palestine refutes all arguments and silences all clamors of those who would make men believe that Calvary closed the story of the Christ. That Jesus rose is acknowledged not by blindly reverent belief, but by careful scholarship and historical research. It is a fact not to be defended, but to rest upon. It is a fact which has sustained the test of life. Fiction does not sway life for long. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has swayed, shaped, sustained life for two thousand years.

We are to think of the resurrection of Jesus not merely as a fact, but to give it the highest place among all facts of Scripture. "He is risen" is the supreme proof of Christ's divinity, the warrant of our faith, the ground of our hope. Yesterday he spoke to the raging sea; and as the waves were hushed at his word we learned that he had power over nature, but we did not learn enough to find in him our Redeemer and our God. To-day he gave sight to the eyes of Bartimæus; but while that told us of One mighty to cure it did not tell us of One mighty to save. To-morrow he will stand before the tomb of Lazarus; and as he who was bound hand and foot in grave clothes comes forth at his word alive and well, we wonder, but still are not sure the wonder-worker is, in himself, up to the level of his work; for prophets have called the dead to life and themselves have died. He preaches. We say, "Surely, never man so spake!" He washes the disciples' feet. We exclaim, "Men are not like this!" He dies on the cross. With the exile of Helena we cry, "It is the death of God!" But when he crowns all other miracles with the last supreme miracle of conquering death in his own body, then, and then only, we *know* he is the Son of God. When, having said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," he fulfills

his word, we know in this he has sealed and fulfilled all other words of his. He has established the claims of the gospel concerning himself, and demonstrated that he has conquered death.

Many of Christ's miracles are not necessary to our faith in him. They are incidental, not essential, in the gospel narrative. Not such is the resurrection. It is one of the essential parts of the gospel. To disprove it is to annihilate Christ and to destroy the New Testament. "If it can be proved that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave not of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasm it has inspired." "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The resurrection of Jesus is the hinge on which the door of salvation swings. On Calvary Christ demonstrated his love. In his resurrection he demonstrates the efficiency of his love. "He is risen." Three words only. But they are the Gibraltar of our faith.

Thus magnificent as a fact in gospel story and thus glorifying Christ as Son of God, what are some of its truths for practical life?

It tells us life is endless. Over Dean Alford's grave is written, "The inn of a traveler on the way to Jerusalem." The resurrection of Jesus inscribes these words above the graves of all who love him. They are places of sleeping, not of burial — houses of lowly portal where for a little while the wearied body rests, to rise in the spiritual purity and beauty, all stains of life's journey washed away, all weariness forever gone. For ages men had hoped for immortality. At the broken tomb of the Son of God Fact takes the hand of Hope. Here expectation becomes reality, for "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" — the first sheaf and pledge of a world-wide harvest of risen souls.

"He is risen." It was at the dawn of day these words were first spoken. They have brought to men the dawn of a new day. They have rolled away the stone and opened the door and revealed Life. The Emperor Theodosius, having opened all the dungeons in his realm and set the prisoners free, is reported to have said, "And now, would to God I could open all the tombs and give life to the dead!" Another King who once in the synagogue of his boyhood home at Nazareth proclaimed delivance to the captives and liberty to them that are bruised stopped before a sealed tomb in the cemetery of Bethany and said, "Come forth!" "And he that was dead came forth." What the Roman could do neither by sword nor silver the Nazarene could do without weapon or wealth. Where earth's power pauses dismayed and earth's love breaks down in sobs, the power and love of God in Christ neither fears nor weeps. Christ lifts his scepter over the king of terrors. Christ plants his feet upon the skull of death, and with uplifted countenance that is as the sun shining in his strength, he cries with voice that is as the sound of many waters: "I am the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." The grave is a gateway in the path of life. "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

The resurrection of Jesus teaches us to interpret and to hopefully bear our sorrows. Goethe defined Christianity as "The worship of sorrow." Isaiah said, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The German singer was wrong; the Hebrew seer was right. Christianity is the religion of joy because it is the religion of the resurrection. In the light of that resurrection we view sorrows and burdens in their relationships. They

are to us not isolated experiences for which there is no compensation, but experiences which bear on others, and in ways we see not now, but some day shall, work together for our good. The years are steps by which we mount to Life. Knowing this, we can well bear the toil and trial of the journey upward, for at the summit the Father's hand will clasp our own, the burdens will all be laid down, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Jerome of Prague sang at the stake, "I give myself in flames, O Lord, to thee." The great apostle sang beneath the lash, "I take pleasure in distresses for Christ's sake." These two men, the one in his winding sheet of flame, the other in his daily baptism of suffering, were looking on life through the broken door of Christ's tomb, and so they sang; not because their distress was not real, not because they were greater or braver than we, but because they measured their trials by life's eternal length and glory. Jean Paul says that in a dream he wandered from world to world along the pathways of the stars. The angel guide left him. Lost, lonely, hungering for companionship and comfort, he adds, "There came sailing onward through the galaxies of stars a dark globe along the sea of light. A human form, as a child's, stood upon it, which neither changed nor yet grew greater as it drew near. At last, I recognized our earth before me and on it the Child Jesus; and he looked upon me with a look so bright and gentle and loving that I awoke for love and joy."

Tired souls, weary, lonely, hungering for peace and joy and comfort, grieving for dear ones taken, carrying living sorrows in your hearts, your shoulders aching beneath burdens, and you, sinning souls, lost in the labyrinth of guilt, look! The risen Christ coming toward you on the sea of light that flows from the golden gates of the New Jerusalem! This is no dream. The Christ draws near

through the morning stars that sing his glory. His shining feet are on the earth, on its sorrow, its pain, its care, its death, its sin, and his voice that never strikes one false note of promise fills earth and heaven as he cries, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The resurrection teaches us the meaning of life. This sublime truth is linked to the commonest duty. In its light we see that to-day reaches into to-morrow, that eternity is the harvest of the present. The commonest event is a crisis. To the disciple of Jesus let the resurrection, then, speak cheer. Christian, your work is a great one. Your work is joined to God and to eternity. Perhaps your lot may be to do only ordinary things; but when you reflect that your life has no end, you can see how the effect of these "ordinary" deeds and words must reach on forever, and how they are no longer ordinary, but extraordinary, rivulets from which rivers come, seeds from which harvests spring; and though your work be tried as by fire it shall endure and eternity will be more glorious because you have toiled for God where he has placed you.

To the man without a Christ the resurrection speaks warning. Man without Christ, you are to face yourself when you cannot change yourself. The thoughts you are now thinking, the words you are now speaking, the deeds you are now doing are making your eternity. The least detail of your life here is a factor in the making of your life beyond. You will die some day. You will leave your money, your business, your home, your friends; you will not leave yourself. Of all the former, as you close your eyes forever on earth, you can truly say, "This is the end of them all." Of yourself, though the body turns to dust, you must say, "This is but the beginning." Yes; the beginning of an eternity you have made.

Let the youth think of the risen Christ as he chooses and plans for his future. Young man, take the long look forward. Choose your occupation with the other side of the grave in view. Choose the ambition that is to master you and mold your life, with *all* of life in sight. The thing that might be very well for you to do and be, if threescore years and ten were the measure of your life, may be folly and sin since you are to live forever. Be careful, be prayerful in what you think and say and do; eternity is your future.

Let the man think of the risen Christ as he goes about the business of each day. Are you willing to face your business record in the presence of God? What are your methods of business? How are you making your investments? How are you dealing with men? Are you doing business for to-day or for eternity? Do it for eternity, because eternity is a fact. We want more men in our churches to go into counting rooms and do business with the resurrection in view. We want to banish forever from the house of God the spirit of covetousness. If you are small and grasping, essentially dishonest, practically grinding the faces of the poor, in love with money, come here by this broken tomb of Christ and ask yourself what it will mean when you stand in his glorious presence and all sham is stripped away and your real self laid bare.

Let the gray-haired listen while the angel sings, "He is risen! he is risen!" There is no old age. The fires may burn low upon the hearth, but they will not go out. The flames of heart and mind and soul will spring up in new brightness by and by. The last stages of the earthly pilgrimage may be inactive, but they are not years of uselessness. Look ahead. They are ripening time for harvest. They are resting time for the new activities of heaven. They are renewing time, when the body of flesh begins to fall away to give place to the body of

spirit. They are refreshing time, when the soul wearied by life's long battle may be bathed in the glory and peace of the heaven to which it is so near. "He is risen." Rejoice, gray-haired saint of God! Thou art on the threshold of eternal youth.

John E. Tuttle.

SECOND QUARTER.

JACOB'S PREVAILING PRAYER.

GENESIS 32 : 9–12, 24–30.

"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham," etc.

THE brief narrative contained in these verses of the book of Genesis is like a precious Oriental gem, set in ancient style and enclosed in wrappings that are strange to us. One coming to it for the first time, divested of the feelings which familiarity inspires, would be impressed as the Orientals are with things imported from Europe or America. They notice, as even we do, the strange odor. Almost instinctively the Japanese will take up a thing brought from America, and say: "It comes from off the ships; it has the smell of the West!" So we Occidentals, looking at the things strange and rare from the East, say they have a perfume distinctively their own.

In receiving and appraising this precious treasure which has come down to us on the winged words of inspiration, we are to notice what features are local and temporary and what are universal and eternal. There is a human and a divine side to this beautiful narrative. There are things which belong especially to the Jews and interest them. There are other truths which make the story palpitate with life for us. The precious jewel is still a light-bearer.

All over the world the Jew is known. In Afghanistan, in India, in China, in Africa his visage is familiar. He bears in his countenance the story of many generations of oppression, of sorrow, of cunning, of sin, yet also of in-

spiration and faith. In Japan the native custom house officer discriminates between the American, Englishman, German, Swiss, French, Italian, and Russian. He knows in outline the history of each country and the traits of each nationality. Yet, to his surprise, he finds that there is one set of men in these countries, but not of them. They speak different languages, yet they all have the same features, facial expression, intellectual peculiarities, and an amazing shrewdness which often degenerates into cunning and trickery. Surprised at the persistent phenomena of mind and character, he slowly learns that these men from various countries and speaking different languages are one. That one is a Jew.

In China the people who bear the lineaments of Jacob are called "the sect that plucks out the sinew." Not down in the law of Moses, but a very ancient and persistent tradition, this regulation for the removal of the sinew of the thigh is still in force. Where the Jew cannot find a professional butcher or one skilled in anatomy he will refrain from eating the flesh of the hind leg. The origin of this perduring peculiarity is explained in the narrative before us.

Again, the incident makes clear to us why the Jews are "the sons of Jacob," and how it is they inherit the traits of an ancestor who had an amazing desire for, and power of obtaining, by hook or by crook, the possession of things which are useful in this life. It also explains the nobler traits of the Israelite, and shows us why he is called after "the victor with God."

In many instances, especially those which are first and original, names are petrifactions of history. They are witnesses to events. The town names of Massachusetts show unmistakably the love which the English settlers felt toward their old homes and ancestral seats across the sea; but still more the warm loyalty which they cherished

toward the royal house of England, the king and his favorites. Chronologically studied, they also reflect the movement of politics in Great Britain. In notable contrast the names of Connecticut towns, except those settled from Massachusetts, convey no reference to English royalty or royalty's favorites. In China one wretched little village far away from Korea shows, as clearly as a surveyor's stake shows his measurements, the former boundary line of the peninsular kingdom's ownership and power. So an insignificant little place named "The Face of God" receives its cognomen of Peniel, because there the founder of a great group of tribes had a vision of the Eternal.

In centuries that were many before the story was written, this narrative touched the heart, fired the imagination, and fed the spiritual yearnings of the sons of Jacob. When God bade the inspired historian commit it to literary form it became, under the divine blessing, a new means of grace and power of comfort to those who seek to have some other sort of religion than that merely traditional, statistical, or formal. John Robinson, of Leyden, who named his daughter "Wrestling," is but one out of the long line of thousands who have taken comfort, joy, and hope from this incident. Even to-day it is more than ever a beacon light, bidding men enter into the haven of successful prayer after the storm and stress of struggle.

What a wonderful story! How thrilling the condensed narrative of Jacob's conversion, exceeding anything that even the Salvation Army records can show! Here is a man who was a cheat and a trickster from childhood, made a willing assistant to his mother, who deliberately deceives old Isaac and swindles Esau of his blessing and birthright. Starting out with only his walking stick to make his living in the far East among ancestral associations, we find him asleep on the ridges of slate rock which

lie like the steps of a stairway above him. Here he has a vision of the messengers of El ascending and descending. After this gracious communication from God we find him in the morning deliberately, and in the most cold-blooded manner, bargaining with the Almighty and stating his terms like a Jew of to-day who is descended from the wrong side of Abraham. He specifies exactly what the Almighty must do before he promises what he himself will do; then, closing in his own way the contract, he moves eastward. The record of his life with Laban is a good deal like one sharp bargainer overreaching another. Years pass by and we find the man whose inventory of property consisted chiefly of one club, now the possessor of great herds of cattle, of wives and children, and reckoned as a great property owner. Evidently he was one of those rich men to whom entrance into the kingdom of heaven is more difficult than the insertion of a camel's head and body into the eye of a needle.

Reaching the land of Seir, the field of Edom, he knows that Esau is near. The wronged brother who still bears the grudge will probably help himself and his fellow marauders to Jacob's abundant property. He sends fair words and presents to the man whom he once robbed. His messengers return with the intelligence that the desert sheik and his retainers are moving down in a body upon him. Then a fear that was purifying came upon Jacob; a wholesome distress invaded his self-conceit and satisfaction. He divided his following, with the live stock, into two companies. Like a skillful general who plans for one force to be beaten and the other to be held in reserve, he hopes at least to save one half of what from the standpoint of righteousness is sheer plunder.

Now we have the selfish wretch upon his knees. He pleads with El, the God of his father and grandfather, and calls upon Jehovah, recalling his promise. He remembers

that even in the midst of his abominable bargain-making God had spoken to him in kindness. He now, for the first time, apparently, uses the language which belongs to all true prayer: that language which annihilates the sectarian differences which exist among men, which erases the name of Calvin or Arminius, and which demolishes all barriers between man and God. He pleads his unworthiness. He has before his now clarified vision not only God's mercies, but the truth which the Almighty Father has revealed to him. He now looks upon his worldly estate as the direct gift of God. He prays for deliverance. His heart goes out in solicitude for the mother and the children. He lays hold again upon the promise — that those who should come after him and bear his name should be like the sand of the beach, innumerable. Hard as it must be to part with his she goats and he goats and other specimens of his pelf, he sends a handsome present to his brother, using all the time, however, those tactics by which he hopes to impress and disarm the hostility of the one whom he has wronged.

Near midnight, probably, he crosses the little stream, and seeing them all safely on the opposite side he is now left alone. The horror of great darkness, which his grandfather had experienced, comes upon him. He is in that situation of life in which so many of us who have come to mature life have been. He is left alone and his religion is reduced to its lowest terms. Hitherto his faith in God has been kept in a daybook and ledger. It has been largely a commercial speculation. It was a profit-and-loss account with Deity. Now, in the crucial moment, he sees that all such religion is pure trash. It does not sustain him or feed his spiritual hunger. He longs for reality. He would see God, not as he had supposed him to be, more or less like himself, but God the real, God the true.

"Never less alone than when alone" is a literary label rightly indexing such experiences. When it said, "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him," there is no contradiction in terms. God was no nearer to him than God had always been, only Jacob now began to have a sense of the divine presence. God had always been willing to bless, was, is, and will be willing to bless all who seek his face. Those who want to get the dust of his feet and think that food and clothing, houses and cattle, money and pelf are God, or the sure indications of his presence, are and will be as much mistaken as was Jacob. Those who fancy that labels, formulæ, war cries, the pet words of faction, the creeds and catechisms formulated by the makers of theological systems, ponderous tomes of theology, incense, ritual or routine prayers make religion, will be as undeceived as was Jacob when they come into the real presence of the divine.

Jacob found that in spiritual religion his previously reckoned assets were worthless. He was a bankrupt. He was alone, poor, stripped, naked. The blessing to him was that he was beginning to see this. God was now speaking to his spirit and counseling him to buy of him and to anoint his eyes that he might see. And Jacob began to see.

The vivid narrative of the long struggle is condensed in lightning-like lines that flash and tremble and thrill. It said "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." This struggle and stress continued until the east began to lighten. Already Jacob was showing himself prevailer and conqueror. Physically he was to suffer loss, spiritually he was to be the victorious athlete. The hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, so that the next day he had to halt. To the divine word which intimated that the struggle must cease came the reply that had in it the whole utterance of Jacob's new life: "I will not let thee

go, except thou bless me." Then came that searching question which laid all Jacob's past life open, as the scalpel reveals the organs of the corpse which were once the conduits of life. With that question all things were made naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom Jacob had to do. No sacrificial victim selected from the flock was ever more helplessly exposed to the knife of the slaughtering priest than was Jacob before this awful question. Simple in form, it searched every atom of his being. "Yes; what is thy name?" And the answer without allegory, as hard matter of fact, had to be given: "Cheat, trickster, supplanter — Jacob."

But all this was past. Centuries after was written the sweet promise, the hope of every penitent, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Man, the despairing, may write his spiritual biography in one word. Poe wrote his in that marvelous poem, "Nevermore." The carrion bird, sitting with its horrible talons and cancerous beak and leering eye, befouling the stainless bust of Pallas, croaked out to him as he cried out for respite and nepenthe from the sorrows of a wasted life, "Nevermore." Buddhism that knows no Creator, Islam that knows no atonement, Brahmanism whose philosophy is pessimism, Agnosticism with its blackness of darkness, Pantheism with its morass of despair, all cry to the soul wrestling with God, "Nevermore." They shower negations upon the inquiring spirit. But the answer of God through all the ages to the struggling soul that pants to see his face, that is unsatisfied with labels, with husks, with the letter that kills, with the systems that wane, comes — "I am he that forgiveth thine iniquities." "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob" — symbol of all fraud and trickery, but warrior, victor with God, for thou hast striven with God, and hast prevailed.

Herein God still cheers the spiritual athlete. He calls

him to the fray. He will have no soul satisfied with his cattle and his pelf. He summons us on to noble discontent with that which makes us fat and satisfied and indulgent. He bids us wrestle, strive, agonize, that he may give us the peace the world cannot give or take away. It may be that the Septuagint and the Vulgate give the right rendering of the answer of the wrestler — "Thou hast had power with God, and thou shalt prevail against men." But to our mind the answer in our Hebrew and English texts seems more true to what was spoken.

With all of the nobler appetites, a little does but feed the desire for more. Does the monarch of the jungle once taste the richest blood of bloods, does he become man-eater once? He will have more. Much more the head of creation in whom alone God has put "the thirst that never pains," inculcated the deathless hunger for Himself, is not satisfied with one draught, with one feast; he thirsts and hungers still. So Jacob with the old longing for acquisition consecrated and turned into a new channel, pleads for more. "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name?" Name is revelation. Name rightly chosen has a world of thought behind it. Bestowed in primal meaning upon a child, a flower or a book, it may be the focused image of a parent's, a discoverer's, an author's thoughts. It may reflect the yearnings in the deeps of his life as the well mirrors a star. It may write a biography and a life's experience. Names in our day are derivative, secondary, fanciful. In the primal ages of a world and of a nation they stand for realities, and are themselves real symbols of truth. Every language when nascent, aboriginal, youthful, proves this. One great benefit of Bible study is the comparison between the time when things were simple, unsophisticated, real, and the later periods when they were echoes of a reality long past. One superb result of biblical criticism, reverently applied by

consecrated scholars, is to put difference between the transmitted and the reflected light of truth, fact, custom, usage. So Jacob, the victor with God, pleads for fuller revelation, for more light, for knowledge of the mysterious nature of the being with whom he has come into contact, that houghs the outward man while the inward man is being renewed minute by minute. Besides the question which the wrestler asks, he adds the longed-for blessing, and Jacob, enlightened and made a medium of revelation, becomes hereafter one who prevails with God and with man.

Awakening as from a dream, entering into a new life, he names the place "The Face of God," and out of a grateful heart, though limping, he gives thanks that his life is spared.

William Elliot Griffis.

DISCORD IN JACOB'S FAMILY.

GENESIS 37: 1–11.

"And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings," etc.

No fable of Æsop is more true to the facts of human nature or more fully charged with meaning for any reader than this story. These pictures of a pastoral family life are taken when the persons are entirely unaware of them. They have no chance to pose. Their feelings and words are caught passing. They act out themselves. Each behaves too very like people of our time. There is no attempt on the part of the historian to modify or intensify these photographs. He does not shade or tone the characters he presents, as might seem to help a faith for which they stand. He simply "holds, as 't were, the mirror up to nature" and leaves all who look to draw their own inferences. They will do it too, and will agree quite well in them.

It is perfectly evident from this account that a man may have too many wives at a time. Four were three too many for the greedy Hebrew patriarch. Whatever the custom in those early days — those "times of ignorance" at which God "winked" — in which he "for the hardness of their hearts suffered" them — the scheme did not work any better then than now in Utah or Turkey or Dahomey.

Leah and Rachel, with their maids, each having her children, could hardly be expected to admire those of their associate partners, equally with their own. Here was a fertile field for rivalries, jealousies, quarrels. It would require a large measure of grace to keep these pestilent domestic growths from springing up. The hus-

band must be a good deal of a tyrant and a good deal of a tactician to keep the peace among his affectionate consorts. No one could have been more thoroughly convinced than he, after a long and troubled life, that the divine intent of the marriage of one man and one woman was best. Polygamy, wherever practiced, has been an offense against the natural, no less than the revealed, law of God. Obstinacy, ambitious display of wealth and lust — the causes of this sin — always and everywhere bring disaster. Heathen or Christian (by name), given to it, finds he has invited unspeakable vexation and worry, for feminine arts are multiform, against which the man has little or no skill at fence. Conjugal love is not so generous and elastic an emotion that it can be equally distributed among a number of persons. It is a unit or it is naught. Leah might have the *title* of wife, but Rachel alone of the quartet held that place; and she had already been laid with touching ceremonial and sincere grief beneath the clods as they journeyed on the way to Ephrath. Jacob was now a widower, though apparently not bereft of helpmeets. These could not much comfort his sorrowing heart.

In the passage before us some of the evils consequent on such a misalliance, some of the weaknesses and faults of parent and child are recited. They are perhaps quite as glaring in monogamistic households: —

I. *The father's partiality.*

Among the twelve sons borne to Jacob, one, and that not the youngest, was his chief delight. He was Rachel's first child. In that face and comely form the beauty of the deceased mother still seemed to live. Most tenderly was he cherished. Most readily was his wish granted. Most charming was his boyish prattle to the fond father's ear. For him the very best and most comely robe was made. It was such as, reaching to the wrists and ankles,

only those of royal station wore. He was the best dressed boy among them all, and perhaps the best in the region, and was therefore made conspicuous. That is a sure way to create the "dandy," as Carlyle calls him, whose "every faculty of soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, *the wearing of clothes* wisely and well; so that as others dress to live he lives to dress."

Bad enough as such a practice is when there is only one child in a family, it is vastly more censurable when one is thus singled out among others. From the group of youth who helplessly witness the favors and gifts lavishly bestowed on one of their number, to the adult children who wrangle in the courts as they contest the will of an over-indulgent parent, there is a uniform feeling of ill treatment. They believe each should have had the same consideration, or such benefits as their varied condition would suggest and demand. Loss of love and respect follows on a failure to be just. Once this is gone in a household, it is hard to keep there the other graces which are allied to and thrive with it. Heart burnings most bitter and alienations most entire may exist among those who gather under the same roof and bear the same name. The occasion of it all may lie in the foolish and unkind preference which all who fail of the like resent. Fond as almost every one is of the tokens of appreciation, ready as most are to appropriate them exclusively, living, as many do, unconsciously in an atmosphere of selfish enjoyment, parents cannot be too careful in bearing an even hand with those given into their charge. It is a serious mistake if any are ruled as Themistocles playfully said of his son: "This child is greater than any man in Greece; for the Athenians command the Greeks, I command the Athenians, his mother commands me, and he commands his mother." Such mastery of the elder by the younger can but issue in

unwise acts, harming both the giver and the receiver. It is an indiscreet love which sets one child before another, or before those who have a prior claim. It is a false kindness which makes an idol of any, to whom no offering is too precious to be paid. Joseph's fine coat was his curse, as many another's has been, put on them by doting, admiring parents. More have been spoiled by overfine than by poor dressing. It has generally led to

II. *The child's vanity.*

Joseph was an artless youth. He told what he saw and felt, as the simple and innocent-minded do. Little doubt he enjoyed the handsome flowing coat distinguishing him from the brothers who were plainly clad. Perhaps there was the least bit of strut in his gait; perhaps a silly taunting of some one of them, as having to wear a cheaper garment. The tempter gets very young hearts and lips to do his bidding, and there is well-nigh a universal liking to be finely arrayed. The savage islander or Indian fancies a necklace of shark's teeth or a pendant of clock wheels to do for him, above his fellows, what the Parisian tailor or *modiste* does for the civilized man or woman. Fine wools and bright feathers give a title to higher seats in the worldly synagogues than coarse stuffs and faded plumage The passion for the former develops early. It has utterly ruined some who in after days have had to shiver about in rags.

But with this precocious boy there was a touch of vainglory, as he told the strange dreams which had come to him in the night seasons. They were uniform in setting him above, not simply his brethren, but father and mother also. The bending sheaves in the barley field before his erect one, the whole planetary system revolving round and paying humble obeisance to him, these were indeed monstrous conceits and provoking visions to be rehearsed to the rest, already having a grudge against him. It was

an assumption of power and dignity which, though having in it an element of truthful prophecy, could but puff up his childish spirit immensely. The smart boy is too apt to be aware of his superiority. With difficulty is he kept from being a prig. We have recognized and praised him, till now he has come to air his accomplishments and look for incense from one and all. He is an increasing puzzle to the educator, and social authorities find it hard to place him. He knows more than "seven men that can render a reason," and is satisfied with no secondary position. Sun, moon, and stars exist for him. Crowned in his cradle he is slow in growing to the size of the diadem, but he wants to wear it from the first, and rejoice in the blaze of its jewels. Not that the world has no need of bright, quick, well-balanced intellects; not that the opportunities of the present should not be made the most of; but our mortification and our blunder is that these modern methods foster pride faster than good sense; and the prophetic warning, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child," has pertinence still, when these immature and ambitious youth presume to sit in the seat of judgment and dictate their will as supreme. To allow any to vault over the years of tutelage and to "come out" instead, from a healthful obscurity into the glare of fashion or the arena of business or debate, is to defeat in the end the very object sought. A peach without its bloom is unripe. A youth without discipline is ungracious. He is almost sure to think himself other and greater than he is; and his vanity is apt to beget, as in this instance —

III. *The brothers' envy.*

They saw that his father preferred him to themselves. He had the visible proof of it and flaunted it in their eyes. "They hated him," we read, "and could not speak peaceably unto him." No slight cause was the report which the pure-minded boy brought home of their shame-

ful, immoral conduct. The informer may always expect resentment. Again, it is said, they "envied him." "This dreamer," they sneeringly called him, and took good care that his visions should come to naught. So one of the most repulsive vices grew apace within them, stimulated and strengthened by his silly egotism. It still riots and wastes and blasts everywhere among men. It has, less than any other sin, its seat in the flesh and is a soul canker. The ancient poets — the theologians of their day — used to personify it. They represented it as a deity of the lowest order, a meager skeleton, dwelling in a dark and loathsome cave and feeding on snakes. Hiding away from the light and subsisting on the most disgusting venomous food, it is correctly drawn. It fastens not on things, but on persons, and slyly, silently, constantly seeks and rejoices in their faults and failures. It would pull down, from every pedestal to which the common verdict has raised them, the great and the good and the prosperous. It knows no heroes, believes in no saints, acknowledges no merit. It is strongest in those breasts where there is entire lack of that virtue which all admire. It is the germ of the communistic idea. It plots without more definite purpose than to destroy all facts of difference between men, and is never so diabolically glad as when it brings some lofty Vendome column of personal glory to the ground. It is an adept at hypocrisy. It can be smooth and plausible as a Jesuit, and bitter and faithless as Satan. It can secrete itself in natures which hardly dream of its presence there till some object at which it would strike appears; and then it springs like a serpent and startles its possessor that he too is so like the ugly person in whom it detects its own mate — for these vices hunt, like other reptiles, in pairs. There is no noble appeal to which it can respond, no holy aim which it can endure. It is ever destructive and not constructive.

It dwarfs and paralyzes divinely implanted faculties. It illustrates Lord Bacon's saying, "Men's minds will either feed upon their own good or upon others' evil; who wanteth the one will prey upon the other, and whoso is out of hope to attain another's virtue will seek to come at even hand by depressing another's fortune." This latter course is despicable in the extreme. It ever tends to cramp and demonize what God has made to expand and reach out toward heavenly states. Like carrion birds and beasts, it becomes unclean and defiles, as the fabled harpies, the choicest feasts. It changes into its own foul image the very form in which it tenants. It lines the face and draws the eyelid and pinches the nose, till one can clearly discern its features, and behold the human countenance publishing its indwelling to every beholder. One captured by and surrendered to it finds no lofty meaning in life. Sullenly the dreary round of tasks is performed, no promise of a better future is heard, and unloved, unwept, he sinks away. If he carry not with him the guilt of some terrible crime inspired by this indwelling fiend, yet it has prematurely wrought "rottenness in the bones" and has its fitting epitaph inscribed by a heathen poet: —

> Envy at others' good is, evermore,
> Malignant poison sitting in the soul,
> A double woe, to him inflicted with it,
> Of inward pain, the heavy load he bears;
> At sight of joy without, he ever mourns.

How to be rid of such a foe must sometimes be the despairing cry of its captive. There is a voice it will obey, a power before which it cowers. When once, in answer to the appeal, the Lord Christ has said, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," the wily devil, though he tears and swears, comes out. The man is saved to self and love and heaven.

De Witt S. Clark.

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.

GENESIS 37 : 23–36.

"*We know that to them that love God all things work together for good.*"— Romans 8 : 28.

How plain it all seems now! How easy, at the distance of centuries, to be patient in Joseph's trials and glory in his tribulations! But if we are to count for much in this world, the chances are that we shall taste afflictions for ourselves. God grant that to study his experience may help us to his victory. Three strong words sum up the teachings of the story : Purpose — God working out his far-seen plans ; Discipline — God preparing his leader ; Trust — the man's part in meeting God's ordainment.

I. *The divine purpose.* Uninspired history records for us events ; biblical history shows God's purpose in the events. The Bible is another Joseph, interpreting to those in the prison of doubt their vague and discomfiting dreams. The Bible is another Rosetta stone, on which are recorded side by side the hieroglyphics of human disaster and woe, and God's interpretation of them in a familiar tongue, the whole being, not some decree of a Ptolemy, but of the King of kings. Here may the curious, anxious, anguished soul find the key to the enigma of his own life.

Glance first at the scene in Dothan. We find a group of burly shepherds, not overnice in life or kind in spirit. The younger brother comes in sight, wearing the robe that marks the father's purpose to give him the rights of the firstborn. Some more dreams to boast, they think,

or another evil report to ferret out. The daring word that so often turns men to mobs or murderers falls like spark on tinder. Off comes his famous coat, and down into the pit he goes, to starve or be devoured by some roaming beast. And as if the deed had whetted appetite, they sit down to eat. After all, the lad is not murdered, but how much better is it to be handed over to the tender mercies of slave dealers? Then the last despairing plea to his brothers is scorned, he is dragged along tied to a camel, with the lash ready to quicken slow footsteps. Bitterest of all, the caravan route passes near Hebron. There in sight are his father's tents! Picture the agony of that hour, the wild hope that something might bring his father to the place to rescue him, the desperate struggle to escape, and the despair of being dragged away. How eagerly would we have cut the rope and turned agony to ecstasy! And what a disaster we should have wrought to ourselves and all the world! We think there is nothing here but the heartlessness of jealousy, the helplessness of innocence, the anguish of bereavement, in a word, the cruelty of fate. Read on to the Finis. The next lesson shows us Pharaoh's hand reached out to set the slave next the throne.

Joseph's bondage was necessary for the world's salvation. But for it, where were the nation compacted by sufferings and inspired by deliverances? Where the Passover lamb, and the long training that led up to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world? But for it, how were your sins and mine to be put away? No; it was not the cruelty of fate, it was not divine indifference, it was gracious plans working out happy results. Not chance but Providence shaped events. No Cloudy Pillar was seen guiding the Midianitish caravan under the slope of Dothan, but the tinkling bells of their soft-footed camels chimed with purposes ordained from before the

foundation of the world. The shifting of pasture and wandering of the flocks far from the protecting home, the trade between Midian and Egypt, the popularity of Syrian slaves, the purchase of the boy by a man in authority, the beauty of the lad and the shame of Potiphar's wife, all had their recognition and use under the Power that rules even the unwilling for his ends, and turns the wrath of man to praise him.

The wickedness of the brethren, the weakness of Reuben's kindness, are left in their true colors. Such get credit for the evil they intend, not for the good wrought out in spite of them. The cruelties of injustice and the sufferings of innocence may be part of the preparation for the world's Redeemer. Resist evil, remove it; but never let its presence and apparent victory bring doubt or distrust of the Almighty love and power. What we cannot help, it is safe to endure with that long patience which characterizes "the treatment of the world's wounds and maladies by Him who is patient because Eternal, — together with a majestic indifference to, or rather a sublime endurance of sorrow, suffering, and sin during the intervening time, however long, till the seed has borne fruit and the cause has worked to its issue."

But what need of bringing all this distress upon Joseph? Why not have led him there honored like Abraham, and so introduce the nation? Because for Joseph's own sake the trial was needed.

II. *The divine discipline.* Great movements demand great leaders. Strong character is not given, nor found, but developed in trial. Discipline is the condition of strength. Heroes are bred in hardship. Joseph must be trained for his great destiny. What opportunity for this while wandering between his father's home and his brothers' pasture? The partiality of the one and the jealousy of the others alike forbade his tarrying in Canaan.

The lad has in him the faith of Abraham, patience of Isaac, and business ability of Jacob; but the powerful character which is to dominate generations and rule centuries needs for growth a rugged soil. Boasting and the bringing of evil report must be exchanged for self-command and considerateness, though thong, lash and prison are the price. His degradation began his training for nobility; the bottom of the pit was his first upward step toward dignities; his gay coat was stripped off that he might put on royal purple; the march with the slave gang was drill for riding in the chariot next the king. He must learn to be under authority before he could have others under him. Instead of a desert sheik, rich in flocks and herds and maintaining by force his superiority to his brothers, he was to become the wise ruler of a land where such have been all but unknown, to stand between a nation and starvation, preserver of his kindred and the chosen, mighty personality to carry over the faith of the patriarchs into the destiny of the nation. All this demanded discipline the most rigorous. Discipline is the purchase-money of nobility and of usefulness. It is the storm which strips the oak while it toughens its fiber. Discipline is the torrent which sweeps away golden harvests and lays bare veins of gold. Discipline is the glacier grinding barren rock to richest wheat field. Character is silver, to be refined with fire, diamond to be polished in its own dust. We may imagine a Joseph, a Moses, a David, a Paul, a Luther, a Lincoln, without the afflictions that wrought out their greatness and gave it opportunity; but we do not find them in history. Bunyan's Pilgrim would never have stepped forth from a palace door to lead the generations to the Heavenly City, nor could Cavaliers or Hidalgos have founded a free America. All the necessity we may not fathom, but the fact we cannot doubt, that the place given to chastisement in God's Word is the

place it occupies in human experience, the essential instrument of noble character and distinguished usefulness.

Nor is it all sorrowful. It brings into fellowship with Christ. It made Joseph even a type of that blessed Redeemer who was preferred above his brethren but cast out by them; honored of his Father, but sold for a few pieces of silver; given to prison, but raised to highest honor; suffering all cruelties, yet loving his persecutors; not ashamed to call them brethren, winning them to repentance and clasping to his heart with utterest forgiveness, welcoming to royal feast and lasting joy. That he knew nothing of all this makes more impressive the lesson for us to accept what we cannot understand nor welcome for its own sake. Had Joseph seen the honors of Egypt beckoning, he would have shouted instead of weeping. And though life should not reward, eternity can be trusted for explanations. "To him to whom life is but an episode, a short stage is the existence of eternity, who is always cognizant of the great surrounding world of mystery, grief comes as angels came to the tent of Abraham. Laughter is hushed before them. The mere frolic of life stands still, but the soul takes the grief in as a guest, meets it at the door, kisses its hand, washes its travel-stained feet, spreads its table with the best food, gives it the seat by the fireside, and listens reverently for what it has to say about the God from whom it came."

III. *The man's trust.* Faith and faithfulness, trust in God and loyalty to duty, tell how Joseph fitted himself into the divine purpose. In this day, well along in the '90's of the nineteenth century, youth grasps life early. To be born to wealth is too often to be born to worthlessness. Ease they have not earned, luxuries that cost them no labor, such have without the asking. Honors they look to gain by inheritance or marriage. But this vapid, *blasé* creature is not the characteristic

youth of the age. The world amuses itself with him in joke and caricature, but counts him out from its serious thought, and looks to its Endeavor Societies, its Christian Associations, its Young Men's Political Clubs for future leaders. Joseph of to-day understands so well the rewards of life and the cost of winning them that he accepts hardship as part of the contract, and at once the hardness is gone from it. While his foot is at the bottom of the ladder, his eye seizes the top. The cash boy knows the head of the firm started in his place, and expects to make the same advance. The college graduate packs away his diploma with his dress suit, and goes to sorting wool, filing castings, or winding armatures, because he sees that this way runs the royal road to success. Joseph was to be the archetypal Yankee, as well as the instrument of divine purpose. But of all this the stricken lad knew nothing. What should a boy of seventeen in his place know but the bitter mixture of hatred, despair and revenge with homesickness and heartbreaking? That he did not submit weakly his brothers remembered twenty years after: "We saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." No Bible to comfort him as now his very story helps a wronged youth, no word from God, not a glimpse or whisper that we know of after those misused dreams; nothing to cling to but memory of a father in Canaan and trust of a Father in heaven, it was strength of soul that held him up. Jacob's experience found its noblest result in the trust and determination of his favorite son. Jacob risked everything to wrest the birthright from Esau. He got it, but not as he had planned. All his pottage and kid's broth and lying went for nothing but hindrance and exile. Hoof or horn of his father's flocks he never got. But by the struggle in Haran and the wrestling at Peniel he won the blessing, and this he bequeathed to the son whom he

had chosen for the birthright, but not as he had chosen. Joseph's famous coat brought him only sorrow. Trust in God and loyalty to duty brought him distinction and service. Somewhere on the long march, perhaps limping through the monotonous desert, or sleepless for very weariness beneath the stars that told of Jehovah's promise to Abraham, he grew on a sudden from boy to man. And what a manhood! Slavery cannot discourage; jeweled and flattering enticements cannot seduce; injustice and prison cannot break down; ingratitude and neglect cannot sour. As little can prosperity debauch or honors puff up. Worthier than Brutus himself,

> His life was gentle; and the elements
> So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

The most ambitious youth of to-day might be content with Joseph's success. Its essentials he can have, for the conditions are perpetual. Let him settle in his heart that God rules this world and apportions its final awards, whoever may seem to win for a time; that trial is but price of honor and drill for usefulness; that the divine purposes hold opportunity for every soul; and that the man who flings himself into this opportunity, trusts God and does his best, will not fail. Achievements splendid as Joseph's will not come to every faithful life; but like Joseph, he shall master wrongs by endurance, and from slavery itself win mastery. His service shall be blessed, his career honorable, the peace of God shall rule his heart, and the purposes of God enfold his life.

Charles M. Southgate.

JOSEPH RULER IN EGYPT.

GENESIS 41 : 38–48.

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" etc.

THIS lesson deals with Joseph in the time of his exaltation, a time to which he came through years of peculiar trials, in which his remarkable qualities of character were developed and illustrated, commanding the admiration of all who are familiar with his record.

If these qualities of character are to be recognized, and the causes of his exaltation discovered, we shall need to recall his testings from the time when he became a slave or servant of the Egyptian priest.

It is evident regarding Joseph that from his early childhood he was a favorite son, doubtless on account of his affectionate and obedient spirit and his exceptionally pure life. He had, however, been envied by his brethren, later hated by them; and through their conspiracy had been sold to a traveling company of Midianitish traders, who carried him down into Egypt and there made of him a bondman. The cause of this envy and hate was a dream which these brethren interpreted as indicating a kind of sovereignty over them on the part of their young brother. This they could not tolerate: thus they sought his death, but finally compromised on his sale and removal into a far land, where they supposed he would be placed forever beyond the possibility of realizing the fulfillment of his dream.

God, however, had gracious purposes for this lad, for his brethren, for their father, and for the world which could

not be thwarted by envy or malice. Thus a marvelous series of providences was set in motion, to end in scenes of romantic and thrilling interest, proving that divine wisdom is never exhausted, and that divine love and power triumph over the evil designs of men.

Having been saved from death in the pit where he had been cast, and borne away by a company of traders, Joseph reaches the Nile valley, where we next read of him as a servant of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the royal guard.

This young man is now about seventeen years of age, and, so far as human eye can see, is destined to spend his life in menial and unrewardful service. But the eye of God is upon him in that strange land, and God's care over him, with a wonderful part for him to play in the drama of Egyptian history.

At first Joseph seems to attract no special attention; but erelong he secures the confidence, if not affection, of Potiphar, who places him in charge of his house and puts all his possessions into his keeping — doing this, as the record reads, because "the Lord was with him," and of course, in various ways, was discovered to be with him.

Here we have this youthful slave experiencing a remarkable promotion. His path, however, is by no means smooth, nor his days all sunshine. Such is not the path of any one. Life is a discipline: calamities are the common lot of men. Many a burden is borne for the blessing of other lives, many a sorrow endured for the sunshine of others. "No man liveth unto himself alone."

Notice: —

I. *Joseph's testing and strengthening by unforeseen and unexpected sorrows.*

The evil designs of his brethren have failed of their accomplishment. This young brother, whom they suppose will never be heard of again, secures the approbation

and promotion of his slave master, and quickly rises to influence and authority. It would seem that he has experienced the *very worst* that could result from his sale into Egypt. We are ready to give him our warm congratulations. But he is on the eve of one of the sorest trials of his life. Scarcely has he become a trusted and honored servant before accusations are made against him which cause his imprisonment, as a criminal of the deepest dye. Smarting under charges which have no shadow of truth, and under a sentence which has no shadow of justice, he, as heretofore, finds refuge in God; is given grace to bear all with a sublime heroism, and to bide his time. There in prison he soon secures the favor of his keeper, and is given charge over two notable fellow prisoners — one the chief butler, or cupbearer, the other the chief baker, or bread-maker. This brings him into companionship with these imprisoned servants of the king, and prepares the way for certain proofs of God's presence with him which erelong are to be for his advantage.

Here we come on prophetic dreams, or visions, and on the beginning of a glorious end, in which virtue triumphs and infinite love has illustration. These two prisoners of prominence, each in the same night, dream such a dream as cannot be forgotten, whose interpretation, if possible, they would understand. We are to suppose these dreamers ignorant of the true God, both as to his character and being. They seem to have considered their dreams *supernatural*, and to indicate strange, if not sad, experiences awaiting them. At any rate they are puzzled and filled with anxiety, but long to know what is to be expected — whether it be good or ill.

In the morning Joseph finds these dreamers sad, and would know the cause. They tell him their dreams, and assume that none can interpret them: when Joseph im-

mediately asks if interpretations do not belong to God, inviting them to make known to him their dream, and intimating that he may be able to solve the mystery.

Here God comes to his servant again, giving him power to declare the meaning of those strange night visions. About two years now pass without record save that of the fulfillment of Joseph's prophecy concerning the chief butler and chief baker. During these years Joseph remains in prison disregarded and seemingly forgotten, all the while conscious that he is innocent of any crime—waiting for the vindication of his God, but utterly ignorant as to when or how deliverance is to be effected for him.

The king's turn now comes. He dreams: awakes and dreams again; is greatly troubled; is somehow impressed that his dreams may be prophetic: thus he would have the interpretation of them.

Many magicians and "wise men" are in his realm, who are believed to have skill in certain occult arts and sciences, especially in interpreting dreams and oracles and solving mysteries. The king's first, and likely only, thought is of these magicians and wise men. He therefore summons them. They come, listen to the recital of his dreams, but frankly confess themselves unable to give interpretation. Some things are too hard for man. Some things belong alone to God. In every human life times come when the soul almost involuntarily appeals to the Infinite. Light is required, and help demanded confessedly above all human power to give. Blessed he who in such extremity seeks God, or can find a friend to seek God for him!

Some have severely criticized the action of this anxious king in calling in the magicians. But granting his confidence in them to do what they professed themselves able to do, and what the people generally believed them

able; and granting also, what is likely true, that he had knowledge of none else to whom he could hopefully apply for help, this king's course was consistent and is to be commended. Conceiving his double dream to be prophetic, it was the *privilege*, if not the *duty*, of Pharaoh, to seek a solution of the mystery. The trouble with him was his *ignorance*, not his *intention*. It was praiseworthy in him — is praiseworthy in any man — to seek an understanding of that which is mysterious, especially if it relates to personal duties or experiences.

The king was troubled. His dreams were portentous. He could not forget them. Neither the splendor of his court nor his unlimited kingly power can put him back where he was before he dreamed. High officials may be at his command; obsequious servants may anticipate his every temporal wish; but he is haunted with fears that will not away. No subject in all his realm is bewildered with so great uncertainty or burdened with so sad a heart.

All this while God is arranging for the exaltation of his tried, trusted, imprisoned servant. Dream after dream is preparing the way for his deliverance. Demand after demand for help is being felt, now by fellow prisoners, and now by the king himself. The testing and strengthening process is going on: but things are soon to change.

II. *Relief at hand.*

Two years before, when Joseph had interpreted those dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker, he had besought the chief butler, when he should be set free, to remember him. During these two years, however, this request had been neglected, if not forgotten. Such is the way of the world. Selfishness and ingratitude everywhere abound. Men are inclined to think of themselves and forget their benefactors.

Joseph is still in prison; but God has not forgotten him. The plans of the eternal are perfecting as they

always are, whatever may be the distrust of human hearts or the dimness of human vision. Human ingratitude cannot overcome divine solicitude. Man's neglect never thwarts the divine interposition or causes any of his gracious plans to miscarry.

At last, just at the opportune time, this chief butler is reminded of his obligation to Joseph, and of the ability of the prisoner to interpret dreams. Thinking it may advance his personal interests to tell Pharaoh what Joseph did for him, he mentions how this young Hebrew "servant of the guard," two years before, interpreted a dream for him.

Pharaoh has found no help in his magicians and wise men; and so, as a last resort, he sends for Joseph, brings him hastily out of prison, tells him all about his dream, which no one has been able to interpret, and that he has heard of him as having power to solve such mysteries.

Joseph answers that he has no power, such as Pharaoh seems to credit him with; that of himself he cannot make known the counsels of heaven; but adds: "*God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*" He then goes on to interpret the dream, predicting seven years of plenty, to be succeeded by seven years of famine — conditions which God will shortly cause. He then passes from the relation of an *interpreter* to that of a *counselor*, giving God all the glory for the revelation he is able to make of the meaning of the king's portentous double dream, thus impressing Pharaoh's mind with the thought that God, after all, is to deal mercifully with him and with his people.

The counsel is that Pharaoh shall search for a man who is discreet and wise, and shall make him ruler, or general superintendent of his realm; then appoint overseers, who, in the name and under the authority of the king, shall make provision for the approaching famine. This provision is to be the laying up of a fifth of the product of

the land, either by taxation or by purchase — this fifth of the corn and grain to be stored in the granaries of different cities, so that when famine comes the people shall not perish.

Here is a strange test of Pharaoh's faith. Shall he believe the word of this young Hebrew slave who has been incarcerated as a criminal? There were surely no signs in the sky or on the earth of the truth of Joseph's interpretation of his dream. The king had no reason to expect seven years of unparalleled plenty and then seven years of drought, save as his dream received this interpretation. The remarkable thing is that this word of Joseph was believed, irrespective of what could be seen or what had been experienced.

God's purpose in giving Joseph power to make these predictions was not to gratify the king's curiosity, nor was it to set the king's heart at rest, but rather to effect the deliverance of, and secure honor for, his falsely accused and suffering servant; also to set in motion measures for the preservation of the people. Jacob also was in the mind of God, and the safety of his household in their approaching want, so that far-reaching plans of providence for Israel should be accomplished. Thus the Infinite works, using his friends, his enemies, and the forces of creation, when such are needed.

III. *Joseph exalted.*

This long-tried and trusted servant of God thus far has had what the world considers a "hard lot." The way has been dark, the path rugged — the trial severe. First he experienced the jealousy and cruel treatment of his brethren; then he became a slave; then is falsely accused of heinous crime; then is imprisoned; then is forgotten by a fellow prisoner whom he befriends and who ought to have interceded for him. The way has all been dark, save as it was illuminated by an unfaltering faith.

The times, however, change. The dawn of day is breaking. That divine Friend, in whose hand are the hearts of all, and who can make the wrath of man to praise him, is now drawing near with deliverance and exaltation. Joseph is given visions of what the coming years hold for this Egyptian king and for his people. Pharaoh is led to exercise faith in the word of this poor prisoner; and led also to regard him as the one who, above all others, is competent to take direction of his affairs. He therefore elevates him to the highest office, makes him prime minister of state, comptroller of his household, chief justice of his realm, and publishes abroad that according to Joseph's word all his people and all his affairs shall be ruled, and that only on the throne will he be greater than this freed slave.

As a ratification of this remarkable commission, and in token of peculiar favor, the king gives Joseph his own ring; also clothes him with robes befitting his office, causes him to ride in a chariot next his own, orders all the people to bow in obeisance before him, calls him by the new name "Zaphenath-paneah," which means, "revealer of secrets," and gives him for his wife a daughter of the priest of On. All this because convinced that "the spirit of God" is in this mysterious stranger, who has proven himself able to interpret dreams, and who has proposed a plan by which the people shall be preserved from the desolation and destruction of a widespread famine.

After this manner God's suffering servant is rewarded and exalted. From his prison cell he goes forth over all the land of Egypt as *real ruler*. He becomes gatherer, keeper, and disposer of all the products and stores of that realm; has full liberty to worship the God of his fathers and to rear his family in the faith of his fathers, though dwelling in the midst of degrading idolatries.

Joseph is about thirty years of age when these remarkable events occur. The seven predicted plenteous years come and go, in which food is gathered and stored in those Egyptian cities — years the like of which for abundance, we may suppose, had never been seen. Meanwhile Joseph carries himself as a prince of God, securing universal respect and confidence, if not affection, and making provision for the seven predicted years of dearth so soon to come.

What a change for this young Hebrew! How strange he must have felt, going up and down the land, wearing the king's ring and clad in royal robes! Here he is, a foreigner, a slave, and recently a prisoner accused of heinous crime, now risen to the rank of a *ruler* with power to exact reverence and obedience from all the people! But we may notice: —

IV. *That this exaltation comes after long delay.* Joseph was seventeen years of age when he left his father one sunny day to seek his brethren and learn of their welfare on the plains of Shechem. Previous to this he had dreamed of binding sheaves in the field, and of sheaves around making obeisance to a single sheaf standing in the midst; had dreamed also of the sun and moon and eleven stars as making obeisance to him. In the simplicity of his heart he had told these dreams to his brethren. They had interpreted the dreams as indicating that he was to have dominion over them, and had scornfully resented the thought, seeking to escape humiliation by selling him into Egypt.

Thirteen years go by, and Joseph, instead of reaching the realization of his dreams, is exiled from his home, becomes a slave, rests under the gravest suspicions and vilest imputations — languishes in a dungeon cell, and naturally would despair. Twelve months, and nothing of the dreams! Twelve months more, and nothing but false

accusations. Year after year goes by; this youthful dreamer is still imprisoned. The wonder is that Joseph does not look upon those dreams of his boyhood either as a "vexatious nightmare" or as sent to mock him, and destroy his peace. He seems, however, to have been ever hopeful and trustful. At last the reward comes. It will be so with all who are obedient and trustful.

Many things conspire around all God's children to destroy their faith in God, to shake their confidence in divine assurances. It often tremendously taxes men to rest patiently, and quietly wait for deliverance. Let us never forget that though it may take a long time for the divine pledges to be fulfilled, *they are all sure;* and that when the essential conditions are accomplished we shall see that not a moment has been wasted in the process of working out results.

Souls affirm that they have prayed and struggled and endured year after year, and yet that "nothing has come of all this waiting upon God" — nothing, surely, that is "worthy of mention as compared with the strain upon them."

It is not easy to wait. But all may comfort themselves by falling back on a history like this of Joseph, which teaches that God is ever at work for the highest good and richest reward of his children. Life is a "tone without language," a wasted thing, an unanswerable enigma, unless it be true that after the full measure of waiting the windows of heaven shall be opened and the largest blessings of a covenant-keeping God shall descend upon the loving, loyal child.

Justin E. Twitchell.

JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BRETHREN.

GENESIS 45: 1–15.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him."

THE family discipline of the founders of the Hebrew nation is as marked as the features of their race history. For a considerable period God's training of men in their relations to their households and relatives comprised about all their practical religious duties. Abram broke away from ties of kindred, as well as from the heathen about him, when he journeyed westward to colonize Canaan. After he gave up idolatry his great tests of faith were in dealing with delicate domestic details. His anxieties were about Sarah, Ishmael, Lot, and Isaac, and his trials were such as were caused by his attempts to be faithful to them. His less worthy traits were brought out by his efforts to protect his home in Egypt and Philistia. He tried to keep peace in his family without harshness to Hagar and her son. He took the bitterness out of any rivalry for wealth by giving Lot his choice of residence. Abram's three prayers, for Ishmael the stranger lad and Lot the foolish nephew and Isaac the son of promise, with the corresponding conduct they represent, are models for all similar situations to this day. There was a serious crisis in Isaac's household owing to a woman's intrigue; but the boys made up their difficulty. Now Jacob's sons, children of different mothers, were a set who would need all the grace of a modern Christian parent to manage. Our lesson to-day shows how their breach was healed. The descendants of Ishmael and Esau dwelt apart from those of Isaac and Jacob; but

there was no bitter feud perpetuated by their fathers' trouble or because of any injustice which rankled in their hearts.

I. *The principle of forgiveness perpetual in a family.*

This is really one of the strongest strains that can be propagated in human blood. To this day the Jews are not a vindictive people. If anything of Christ's graces can be transmitted from one generation to another, it ought to be this of forgiveness. Joseph had behind him a long record of gracious deeds done by his fathers. He was old enough to know the romance of Jacob's service for his beautiful bride Rachel, his stubborn patience with her family, and perhaps had marked the spot where the Mizpah stone was set up. He had been in the caravan on that day of momentous meeting with Esau, bringing up the rear in the folds of his mother's skirts, sharing in his childish heart the fear that pervaded the whole company. But the day passed without storm and closed in a peaceful sunset that shrouded no field of blood. Joseph had seen the manly brothers weeping on each other's neck, and had come near to meet his uncle Esau. The memory of this scene and of his father's example, the story of the prayer on the preceding night, the mark on the thigh, and the wrestling angel had not passed from the thoughts of the ruler of Egypt. He had these striking examples of family forgiveness as part of the household traditions, as well as of his early associations.

A fatal mistake is often made in homes where people mean well, when they turn aside from enforcing the gospel principle of pardon for offenses. If parents now and then counsel children to stand up and fight with comrades, they soon apply the same advice in relation to their brothers and sisters. Taking slights easily in churches or quarrels with friends affects the tender impressible hearts more than telling them to be Christians. One of the worst elements

in the life of the young is to be made partakers of family jars or neighborhood feuds. Your little ones ought not to know that you don't like Mr. or Mrs. Boniface. The reconciliations with relatives were the scenes most vivid to Joseph's mind, not vendettas and reprisals.

The blessing of the aged in our households is illustrated in the case of the patriarchs. Many families are kept together and serious breaches bridged over because father or mother still lingers. The old people sometimes think their work is done; they are useless and a burden; yet not only children, but grandchildren, are often held and started right by the continued presence of these venerable souls. Joseph's eager question was: "Doth my father yet live?" It was this life which lapped over the years of active usefulness, which was still potent to mold the destinies of a mighty nation. The great age of the early saints may be accounted for by their helpfulness in binding together their descendants. They were the books of experience which the new race must read, when there was not yet a philosophy of history. The memory of little Benjamin's birth, and the lonely grave of Ephrath, the father's pride in the gift of the coat of many colors, the great reconciliation with Esau, scenes of boyhood and of ancestral history opened up the pathway for union from Egypt to Canaan, from the throne of Pharaoh to the altar of Bethel. The sons of Jacob did not wait the uncertain settlement of death to effect a reunion. It is the pains taken in getting family forgiveness established as a bed-rock principle which will count for gracious lives more than any brand of society set or mode of external culture. It is the key of the heart for a happy home, and for the cleansing blood of Calvary to enter the soul.

II. *Proper precautions to prevent lapses on the part of wrongdoers.*

The unnatural conduct of Joseph's brethren in putting him out of the way and selling him required some precautionary measure to make certain they were changed men. They had been united in their purpose to rid themselves of him. Some were less guilty, but no one protested against the final disposition of Rachel's son. Joseph had to deal with these men as a whole. They had all been in the conspiracy except the youngest. It was not now simply a matter of personal forgiveness, but wisdom in treating with a combination. Many of the hardest questions for human solution are those which arise when members of families take sides for or against an individual. You cannot see the aggrieved person alone, nor can you unravel the network of falsehood and prejudice in which they are entangled. Many men have broken themselves up entirely by attempting to set themselves right with a disappointed group. Christ tells us how to adjust matters with our brothers with whom we have had difficulty, as individuals; but when we come to public church or newspaper explanations we need the whole of the divine wisdom to guide us. We have to study scenes like this of Joseph's dealing with his brethren to keep our poise and not say too much. We have to await God's action on the entire circle from which we are alienated if we cannot do as Joseph did. We are not in a position to bring people to their senses as did this ruler. We cannot put our enemies down cellar to think over their behavior as our mothers used to do with us. Joseph was a governor of a foreign people. He had a place to hold of responsibility. Treaties with his own kinsmen, if they were still conspirators, would be dangerous for his realm. He simply tried to draw out the strength of their family affection and assure himself of their genuine repentance as a whole.

When we see a flag of truce, even though the signs of

surrender are not marked, we ought not to wait for men to get out the full, manly confession, "I have done wrong." It is good for them to make it; but if they begin to approach you, it is time to make up, and don't mind if you go more than half way over the road. The prodigal's father probably walked a good deal faster than his son and covered most of the ground before the boy got far from the pig pasture. If a comrade comes around to play, though he doesn't say anything to you about the past, you can assume that he wants to resume old ties. It is not difficult to know a genuine desire for reconciliation on the part of others, if we understand any of the signs by experience ourselves. When Pharaoh's pilgrim premier satisfied himself of the genuine character of the repentance of his brethren he kissed and treated them all alike. There were no precedents among heathen rulers for such conduct. Most Oriental despots would have cut off the heads of these members of their own households. Joseph did not leave any chance to retreat, or reserve a single bitter memory to hold over any in case of return to evil. He was the youngest, save Benjamin, and yet he led in the peace-making. We are not to hesitate to make advances because we are younger or older than others.

A young woman who saw that one more advanced in years than she was chilly in her treatment went to the person and tried to find out and settle the difficulty. The elder, while not yielding graciously to a settlement, said: "Well, you are a lady, anyhow." This is a tribute we ought to get — "You are a Christian, anyway," even if all the roots of bitterness are not extracted at once from others' hearts. We trust without controversy every one who has a disposition to be at peace with us and all who have Christ in the heart, however imperfect in character, if they desire forgiveness. There may be still adjust-

ments to make, but we cannot strain mercy in the world for which the Saviour died.

III. *Recognition of divine Providence in sorrowful as well as joyful experiences.*

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." We find this spirit had begun to develop in Joseph before the occasion of his brethren's visit. He named his son Manasseh, meaning, to forget; not that the memories of his home had faded, or his sad experiences, but they were written over now with joyful providences. He took life in that mood from the first. When he was in prison he did not sulk, but inquired of sorrowful officers of the court what it was that troubled them. He interpreted their dreams, and they forgot him, but his temper did not change. This disposition of heart was as significant of his future mastery as the dream about the sheaves bowing down to him in the land of Canaan. Joseph did not repay forgetfulness with the same coin. He did not circulate any counterfeits, if others did. His words always had a genuine ring. When a man gets a bad piece of money he often thinks he must pass it again, but the Hebrew captive was always willing to lose what they gave him, which was hollow.

From many of our eastern homes men have gone away amid trying scenes and difficulties. Property has come, but they make no advances to relatives or show desire to return. They are nursing ancient grudges and waiting for some older or less fortunate brother to look them up. Joseph's brethren did not try to discover him. He sought the reconciliation. Those who have had early alienations might look on their lives, not as preserved to live selfishly, but to open the way for those less fortunate in character and condition. Suppose the wandering sons in the West should send money to remove their humble relations to their scenes of prosperity: there would be joy in many

New England homes. Death does not crown the sinner's life or heal wounded hearts or bind up wounds. The frequent cause for extensive colonizations have been calamities, broken fortunes, death of friends, failing health. Even the blunders of life may result also in good under God's blessing. Young people not infrequently have difficulties with parents at the time of their marriage. They ought not to cherish the scars of the breaking away from the old ties. It is often a blessing that they colonize and begin for themselves. A life that has been exalted out of sorrow can afford to do anything for God. You must set the blessings of your experiences over against the hardships of your temporary lot. Such a man takes life head on, as a swift ship which cuts every wave in storm or sunshine. A thankful life for all God's providences has the backbone of a successful citizenship anywhere. Such persons do not complain of the ingratitude of the world when prosperity fails.

IV. *Happy consequences of an adjusted feud.*

Suppose there had been a lasting break in Jacob's household: how different the world's history would have been! The difficulty which was then easily settled made a bridge for great peoples over seas and continents. The stamp of race union was fixed and the seal has never been broken. The principle of forgiveness is a better guarantee of continued family prosperity and history than entailed estates. This makes a man a citizen of the whole world. The Saviour makes this a final test of the heart's sincerity. There is no better evidence of a child's beginning a Christian life, than willingness to make the advance to an enemy or to accept pardon from Jesus. No more genuine sign can be afforded later in life as to our progress or attainment in sanctification than a disposition to seek or grant pardon. It is really everything. Paul says we are no better than empty brass heads, if we

have not this spirit. People will not wait for a reintroduction in heaven. Into the church false pride often creeps, and cold hearts prevent our recognizing our brethren as Christians. Only the spirit of Christ, which suffuses all souls with grace, can give this desire for, or make us willing to secure, this reconciliation with alienated friends, harmony in the brotherhood of the Lord, or prayerfulness for our enemies, or our own peace with God.

William R. Campbell.

JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS.

GENESIS 50: 14–26.

"And Joseph returned into Egypt," etc.

No one who has seen the wonderful illustrations of Homer's Iliad by the artist Flaxman can ever forget them. A few graphic strokes suffice to give in outline such a striking representation of life and motion that ordinary drawing seems superfluous. A similar art is manifest in the Bible in the use of words. The passage before us, for example, with a sweep here and there of brief but pregnant words, gives us a clear outline picture of

HONORABLE OLD AGE.

Let us study the details of the picture.

I. We see here the *loneliness of age.* Joseph returned into Egypt without his father. He had laid the revered form away in the sepulcher of his ancestors, and now he stood absolutely in the front. The generation that preceded him had fallen before the sweep of eternity's tides and been carried from sight and now those waves beat directly against him, and his turn would come next. There is a peculiar sense of loneliness when the father falls by the way and the son suddenly finds himself obliged to face a pitiless world alone. The father may have reached great age; he may have come to be a care rather than the support he was in earlier life; and yet, no matter how feeble and dependent that father may be, his sympathy and counsel are like balm to the weary and anxious son at the end of each day's toils. This honored father has in his sturdy manhood borne the heat and

burden of the day and shielded his household from many a whizzing shaft; and even in his dotage the memory of his past is vivid and the son gains new strength even when, like Æneas, carrying his father in his arms. But the day comes when the father loses his hold on earth and is not. Then a strange and bitter sense of loneliness shoots through the heart of the son. It brings him a revelation of age, a new burden of responsibility, a certain fearful sense of being at the front and under fire.

And as the days go on this sensation of loneliness is more and more intense. One and another drops out by the way, while he who lives moves straight on. His circle of friends and acquaintances is steadily narrowing, just as one on an island in the midst of a raging freshet sees the land melting away on all sides of him and every moment finds less space on which to stand.

> Friend after friend departs.
> Who has not lost a friend?

In the very nature of things as the years fly by we are steadily losing our friends. Some drift away from us and are forgotten; more of them die and leave us sorrowing. No age, however peaceful, can escape this sorrow. But we can do much to defend ourselves against the terrible sense of loneliness. We can cultivate our friendships and make the most of them. And we can, if we are wise, form new friendships as the years go by and so in part compensate for the losses of the relentless years. Age does well to interest itself in youth and to enlarge its territory on one side by friendships with the young as its territory contracts on the other side by the removal of the aged.

II. But however honorable age may be, it is not free from temptations. The passage suggests the *temptations of age.*

The brothers of Joseph knew something of human nature. They knew that as the years increase man feels his power and is tempted to grow hard and severe. They knew that as the years slip by certain restraints that hold a man back in youth are gone. There are few stronger influences in life than respect for parents. A true son will not willingly wound a parent's feelings even by the most innocent action. We could mention a son who gave up his ambition for a profession and remained on a farm simply because his aged father desired his presence. We could mention another who became dissatisfied with the denomination in which he was a minister and desired to change, but out of respect to his father waited fifteen years till the father's translation to a land without denominations opened the way for the son to follow his bent.

It is amazing what possibilities of sin there are in advanced age. There are smoldering fires in every man's heart which, though banked up and hidden for years, sometimes burst out and flame up in fury toward life's end. The inheritance of a large fortune, some sudden and bitter disappointment, the unexpected clash of stubborn wills, the loss of a family friend like a devoted wife or saintly mother who has been the balance wheel in the machinery of one's being, may let loose a storm of passion or a flood of folly of which none had thought him capable. We never can fathom our own depths, and much less those of others; and Joseph's brethren, goaded by a guilty conscience and suspicious of their brother because they knew themselves, had a not unnatural fear of their brother under his release from a father's eye. The shores of time are strewn with the wrecks of gallant barks which had sailed across stormy seas unscathed, only to strike some hidden rock just at the harbor's mouth. There is, to be sure, some protection against sin in age. There is constant self-restraint, steadily gaining with one's

years. There is less and less of the passion that so often flamed up in youth. The habits of a lifetime are not for naught. And yet even on the threshold of eternity the warning of the apostle is needed — "Take heed, lest ye fall."

Happily in the case of Joseph character was fortified against temptation. Age in his case brought no hidden breaches in the defenses and opened no unexpected avenues to sin. Jacob was dead, but Joseph was governed by principle and the loss of a father's presence did not cause a loss in Joseph's power to resist temptation.

III. Joseph's answer to his brethren indicates the *responsibility of age.* A vast deal now rested on Joseph. To be sure, in his case such care came very early; but as the years went this care steadily increased and Joseph recognized it in proceeding to nourish his brethren. As a rule such cares are the part of mature years. The father feels it as his children grow up around him and he is obliged to see them successively through a long course of study and launch them out in business. "Would you believe it?" recently said a gentleman of wealth whose married children looked to him for aid, "there are fifty people whose daily bread I provide." It was in a very different though somewhat similar sense in which a large manufacturer said, "I have known what it was to feel that a thousand people were dependent on me for a living." So a certain mayor once remarked that since his election he felt a responsibility for the very hoodlums of the city. They were in his care and he was anxious for their well-being.

This responsibility often brings to one a fitting sense of his limitations. It did to Joseph. "Am I in the place of God?" he asked. It was not for him to attempt revenge or to seek to punish that which was committed outside of his jurisdiction. He would not usurp what

belonged to God alone. On the contrary there came to him a peculiar feeling of tenderness. He would help others; he would nourish his brethren and their little ones. He comforted them and showed them kindness. With the increase of resources and powers which often comes with years there frequently springs up a desire to be a blessing to the world. Nothing marks our modern day more than the remarkable benefactions of men of means. The men like Peabody, Slater, Otis, Fayerweather, Hand, Rockefeller who disburse millions for benevolence are steadily increasing. All honor to them! In such gifts they are finding their highest joy. It is a peculiar privilege to be able to stand on an eminence and scatter largesses far and wide over a needy world. To do this is Christlike and blessed.

IV. A further feature of an honorable old age is its *wisdom*. Nothing marked the character of Joseph more than this. He was calm, farsighted, and judicious to a remarkable degree. He recognized God's hand overruling the evil intent of his brethren and leading him on through darkness and difficulty into blessing. He could take a view of life beyond his own limited horizon and see that in his early sufferings God was thinking of "much people." He was able by recognizing God as at the center of human affairs to untangle the web of life and to see a divine plan in all mysteries and injustice. This not only comforted him, it restrained his passions and it led him to devise good to evil-minded and unworthy men. Seeing the plan of God as the silver thread in the labyrinth of evil, he was able to feel kindly towards wicked men and to deal kindly with them. Joseph might easily have become bitter towards his fellows and then when he came to power have done to others as he had been done by. But this was not his way. As the years came and went he saw more and more clearly that God ruled and that a divine

blessing lay concealed beneath the sharpest asperities of life.

V. It is but a step beyond this to note the *religiousness of age* as indicated in the case of Joseph. As the years advance, the earth loses its hold and to the religious man heaven comes steadily nearer. God is in all his thought. The man of years, rich in a Christian experience, has found God everywhere and now delights to walk with God. The Bible is his constant companion. He is much in prayer. He has no patience with materialism, for he has found that back of all phenomena is the irresistible power of God. It is this discovery, or rather this vivid consciousness of God, that makes old age radiant. The thought of God is a sunset glory which gilds the western sky. In the gathering darkness of declining years, even when to the ordinary observer divinity is not in sight, the aged saint knows God is there and the truth spreads over the whole sky about him a roseate hue. The charm of age is its saintliness. The saintliness of age is due to its consciousness of God.

VI. Joseph's experience suggests to us a *privilege of age.* Joseph not only held on his knee his great-grandchildren, but when too feeble to take the little ones in his arms had the rare joy of looking on the children of Ephraim in the third generation, or, as we should say, his great-great-grandchildren. It is remarkable what a fondness comes to the hearts of the aged for their children's children. In them they revive their youth. In them there is a visible and impressive evidence of their own influence in the world. At the beginning of this century there was living in New England a grandmother who could count over seventy-five grandchildren. We lose mightily as the years advance if youth is not thus encircling us with its brightness and strength. These children and grandchildren take away the loneliness incident to

age. They enliven a burdened life. They give promise of the future. They continue the work that age reluctantly lays down; and they comfort the aged, burning with the same fires of holy ambition to be useful that stirred him in earlier life, with visible evidence that the work dear to his heart is not to be left undone. In view of all this it is manifestly important that youth and age should be in contact. Nothing is more unkind to the aged than to leave them to themselves, to sweep by them in the rush of pleasure and business, with never a word of cheer or an expression of appreciation.

VII. A marked feature of age is its *prescience*. Joseph had been a keen observer of the signs of the times and he knew from the way things were drifting and from his acquaintance with the promises of God to his fathers that the Israelites would not forever remain in Egypt. There is often an amazing clearness of perception in the aged. They have climbed high above the mists of prejudice. They are no longer blinded by fear or ambition or any intense desire. In addition to the light of experience is often joined a rare spiritual knowledge which has come about through a walk with God. Joseph had faith, and this gave him perception of the future. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews instances his assurance that Israel would leave Egypt as a striking evidence of faith. Nothing is more beautiful or more important in age than faith. The time has come when the storm-beaten and footsore traveler must look across the river and see the other shore. He needs this as an inspiration and a joy.

Age that clings to the past or age that insists that the present shall furnish every joy is pitiable and contrary to nature. There comes a time when desire must reach beyond the tide or else be futile. It is the glory of age to plan for a future and the best that is revealed as coming in that future. Joseph in prophetic vision saw his people

happily settled in the promised land and he desired that his bones be carried to the land of his fathers and the home of his descendants. We of to-day know the future more fully than did Joseph. If we are as wise and as honorable as he, our longing will be for a fuller and more complete reunion with our families in another land. We shall desire that they and we stand together in the heavenly streets and thus be "forever with the Lord."

Addison P. Foster.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

EXODUS 1 : 1–14.

"Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, which came into Egypt."

THE book of Genesis is largely a history of families. We are brought face to face with a few prominent individuals with whom Jehovah had special and peculiar transactions. They are the priests and rulers of their respective families. We are in the dawn of history before national life was known; but the book of Exodus ushers in a new era, the curtain rises upon new scenes.

Our attention is first called to the presence of *Jacob's family among a strange people.*

We find them in Egypt, and the causes leading to their migration from their home land were twofold: the desire of Jacob to look once more upon his long-lost son Joseph, and the famine in Canaan. How these two things have operated the world over to draw people away from their native land! Parents will follow their children across seas and mountains. From the mountains of Scotland, the moors of England, and the bogs of Ireland, from the Rhineland and the fair fields of France come fathers and mothers to this country, to be again united to the sons and daughters who had come before and made homes for themselves. Children are the pioneers in the migration of peoples.

Then, too, the other cause is just as prominent. The physical conditions of one country are often superior to those of another. Plenty of food in Egypt allured the famine-stricken inhabitants of Canaan.

People must eat and wear clothes, and they will invariably seek those lands where these wants may be the easiest

supplied. The nation of boundless physical resources, the nation offering the largest culture and greatest civil freedom will always be the Mecca of poor and ignorant peoples of the earth. It can no more stop immigration than it can prevent the tides from washing its shores. It is in this way that one nation can bear the burdens of weak nations. Henry Ward Beecher was fond of saying that this country was a great stomach, receiving all kinds of elements but assimilating them into one body politic. The more we study the emigration of peoples the more do we become convinced of its providential design; and we are living in times when the migration of races is going on as never before. It is one of the features of this century.

The entrance of Jacob's family into Egypt was the first contact of the simple people of God with the great civilized nation of the world. They came from the pastures and sheepfolds of Canaan. Their habits were simple. They beheld the splendor and formality of a matured social order. They saw for the first time the stateliness of a regal government and felt the power of an external authority. They came with their minds full of the traditions of God's direct dealings with their fathers, and were amazed at the complexity and mystery of the Egyptian religion. They came without a literature into the midst of a literary people. They had little knowledge of nature, but the new atmosphere was thoroughly scientific.

A few years before this their father Jacob had given them his parting blessings, assuring them of a national greatness. The idea of being specially favored by Jehovah was dominant in their mind, and here before their eyes was a nation compact, rich, obedient to law and government. Gad and Asher and Judah and the others were to be taught that their blessings were not to be individual and selfishly enjoyed, but to be a nation meant obedience to law and the subordination of individual to

public interest. If they had cherished the thought of immediate and easy enjoyment of the blessings predicted by their father, the sight of the greatness of Egypt must have quieted their anticipations and put off their fulfillment farther down the years. The attainment of nationality was to be a slow process.

Israel came down into Egypt armed with a covenant with Jehovah. Abraham and Isaac and their father Jacob were the parties to some very solemn agreements with Jehovah. No matter how innocent and simple-minded they were; no matter how unsophisticated in the ways of the civilized world, — they yet knew that God had made great promises to them. Their lifelong separation from the literary and scientific nation and unfamiliarity with trained thought were favorable to the maintenance of childlike faith. Whatever God meant they should learn in Egypt, he saw to it that the germs of faith were rigidly fixed in their minds. God dealt with his ancient people just as a parent does with a little child. He wins its love by *promises*. The little one's faith and trust are secured by the display of fatherly goodness, by disclosures of some promised reward. That is the meaning of the first covenants. They were a heavenly Father's promises to a young and trusting nation intended to hold it faithful to himself. Israel came down into that civilized world on the lower Nile strong in hope of divine reward and rich inheritance of earth's good things.

But Israel was brought down into Egypt in order to gain something. It was not chance that brought her there. Egypt was to teach Israel the value of *unity of purpose*. These brothers were not always to live and guide the growing nation. Now that Jacob had died, no strong hand among themselves had yet appeared able to guide and control — and when they themselves had gone the restraining influences would be fewer yet. The young

horde of Israelites must learn something of national cohesion, of respect for some central law. Where better could they learn it than in the country of their adoption, where all things moved in submission to one central, supreme will?

But Egypt could teach Israel yet another lesson, namely, the *value of human learning*. These dwellers in mountain fastnesses and rich plains of Canaan had had no knowledge of the achievements of the human intellect. No kindling ambition to penetrate into the secrets of nature had ever stirred their simple minds. They had no literature in which were embalmed the great thoughts and heroic deeds of their predecessors. The value of such a literature was apparent when they became familiar with the letters of Egypt. The man who in their subsequent history was to wield such a vast power for good, Moses, was to derive no small degree of efficiency from his acquaintance with the civil polity, the literary culture, and scientific method of the Egyptian people. We may never be able to compute the benefits that Israel received in her long slavery in the Nile country.

II. We are next interested in noticing *the development of the family into a race*. "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly." Joseph had died; the eleven brothers had died; and the Pharaoh who had befriended the Israelites had also departed. A new order of things now obtained and men had taken the reins of government who did not remember the cordial relations that once existed between the newcomers and the Egyptian government.

Thus the original relations of favor and good will had passed away. The few souls had become a mighty horde. The part of the country where they dwelt was the rich, fertile Goshen. Here they planted themselves, and industriously followed their old-time vocation of raising cattle

and sheep. They maintained their family life and reared their children in peace. Whatever temptations incident to the new surroundings met them, they yet pursued the even tenor of their way.

They never lost their distinguishing characteristic of industry. Diligence and fidelity have always been the Israelite's prominent qualities. He begins to labor wherever he is placed, and it is remarkable that he should have transported the old kind of life into the new country. He accepted the new conditions with surprising equanimity. This was one secret of his development — his power of adaptation. For the time being he became an Egyptian and threw himself into the development of the resources lying all around him. This pliability of the Jew has stood him in good stead. He shows himself able to master the varying conditions in which he finds himself. This is not an acquired but a natural endowment, and God in selecting this race to be his own people revealed his great wisdom; for he foresaw all the strange wanderings of this race that would take place in succeeding generations. The Israelite has always been an exile — a wanderer. Abraham their great ancestor began that long travel up and down the earth which will not cease until Jehovah shall call his people together for the last time. In our consideration of their evolution as a race we must not eliminate the divine agency. The natural causes attract our attention first because they are the most apparent, but behind all the easily recognizable forces there is the supernatural care and leadership. Divine Providence did not cease with the discovery of Joseph or the easy rescue from famine. Divine Providence concerns itself with nations as well as with individuals; and at the next stage of their progress God ordained the —

III. *Persecution of the race as a means of their development.* "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to

afflict them with their burdens." Their neighbors were astonished at their phenomenal growth and proposed to deal craftily with them. The Israelites had come to a crisis in their career. Perhaps there was danger of becoming so absorbed in the pursuits in which they were engaged that they would be willing to make Egypt their permanent dwelling place. If so, they would inevitably be amalgamated with their neighbors and lose their identity. It may be that already they were beginning to acquire the habits and beliefs of Egypt. This would defeat the divine plan. To fall back now into the tide of life around them would interrupt the attainment of the blessings of the covenant. Some new force must be introduced, and it came in the changed attitude of the Egyptians. Such strange means does God take to further the evolution of mankind. They become jealous of the Israelites. Jealousy ripens into fear, and fear is followed by persecution. Bitter hatred suggests the method of slavery. Slavery has the effect of consolidating the Israelites into firm bonds of self-interest. This was the first thing needed. A community of interest must be felt. They must be welded together by some tremendous pressure from outside. Persecution was the best method at hand. Pain, hard labor, reproach, are the mighty blows by which the divine Artificer brings his vagrant people into shape. It was, to be sure, an heroic method, but nothing else would answer. They must be cured of any lingering fondness for Egypt and the now rising hatred of their masters against them serves to arouse a feeling of antipathy and they repay back in kind. Was there a growing willingness to give up the traditions of their fathers for the religion of Egypt? Then this persecution would tend to prevent a departure and drive them back to the old faith with fresh ardor.

So far as the Egyptians were concerned, they could not have selected a better way of defeating their own ends,

for persecution always defeats its own purposes. It starts out with the intent of crushing the faith it hates, but it invariably ends by giving the faith a new life; for it cements the adherents of that faith into firmer bonds of fellowship. Ridicule a new idea and people will begin to investigate it. Excommunicate the people who believe it and they form themselves into companies to defend themselves. Try to crush out religion and you scatter the seeds of it up and down the earth. When a man is driven to defend the faith he may have loosely held, he will search for the clearest statements of that faith to be found. Thus you cause it to be more clearly defined to the minds of those who had not known it before; hence you have served the hated religion a good turn. You have only given a better version of it to the world, and that is the very thing you intended to prevent. Thus your persecution fails of its object. So it was with Israel. They were forced back to the old defenses by the hostility of their masters, which was just what Jehovah sought to do.

Another thing of value in that persecution was that it taught the Israelites a new art; namely, that of building cities. Hitherto they had been farmers and stock-raisers, but the work to which they were set was that of making brick and building cities. "And they built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses." Such experience and knowledge they could transmit and make use of in after years. Thus they learned something new in their hard trial. Who does not?

It is a common experience. Even in a captivity to some sin, a man may acquire a sympathy for lost souls which he never had before. He learns the cost of sin — its wastefulness — and he comes to hate not only his own peculiar transgression, but all sin. The sinfulness of sin is no longer an unmeaning phrase but a terrible reality. The iron hand of necessity also teaches men to be dex-

trous and fertile. An easy-going youth suddenly thrown upon his own resources, deprived of support from his father, finds he must dig and delve like other people and this necessity calls out his slumbering energies. He acquires himself. He suddenly becomes available to himself.

Our Pilgrim fathers, brought up in luxury and living in the seats of learning of England, became new men when thrown together in the Mayflower, and when obliged to combat the savage and the wildness of a new land. If they had remained in England, they would have maintained their faith and continued to enjoy the delights of learning; but persecution at home and the enforced settlement in an undeveloped country compelled them to found a state, organize a government, build churches, found colleges, and make a garden out of a wilderness. And so the bitter trials of Israel in Egypt were the furnace in which she was being purified. It was good for Israel that she bore the yoke in her youth. Under such fierce heat Israel was fused into such tenacity of life that no succeeding persecutions have ever been able to destroy it. Whatever has since come upon her in the way of malice, scorn, and social ostracism has only added new strength to her life and sent the roots of the race deeper into the earth. And wherever the Jew goes he remembers that he is a child of Jehovah, and therefore of promise.

We can learn a very practical lesson from the sojourn of God's people in a foreign land; namely, the victory to be achieved over the most unfortunate conditions. Our lot is never so bitter as it might be. Israel endured her disgrace of slavery for hundreds of years in silence. What patience under the woes of oppression! What a training in character! Your patience, meekness, faith in God under trial will be an inheritance your children will enjoy. It will be transmitted through blood and they will be calmer, braver, because you have been calm and brave.

Edward Sampson Tead.

THE CHILDHOOD OF MOSES.

EXODUS 2: 1–10.

"And there went a man of the house of Levi," etc.

How potent a factor in guiding society is the influence of childhood! Before the babe has any independent life, before he puts forth a thought, how far does he mold the world's thinking! What is the subtle power that puts the scepter in his hand, and moves him to use it to protect himself and to make the strong serve him? No influence is more widely acknowledged than that of the babe; and none is counted more beneficent. The ideal society is described by Isaiah as the one in which the nursing babe shall play in safety over the asp's nest, and in which a little child shall lead an untamed leopard beside a kid. In such a society might serves weakness and innocence is kingly. To estimate this power at its full value is to enter deeply into the secret motives of the human heart. To give it free play among social forces is to hasten the day of Christ, the consummation of the kingdom of God.

The value of unconscious infancy in the divine economy lies in its appeal to humanity, in its awakening the spirit of self-sacrifice for love's sake, which was perfectly realized in the only begotten Son of God. The childhood of Moses furnishes varied illustrations of this appeal and of the responses which soften and sweeten and dignify society and lead it to a truer comprehension of God. For it is forever true of all souls that except they become as little children, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. We find here described: —

I. *The child's appeal to his parents.* The solitary life is fragmentary. The earliest revelation contains its own evidence that it is from Him who perfectly understands human nature: "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone." It is no better for the woman to be alone than for the man. There are great depths of being in both their natures that are never stirred till wedded love kindles them into life. There are heights of joy and of sorrow bringing wealth and completeness to character never attained except through marriage. The noblest praise of God is to call him our Father, and worthy adoration is the song, "God setteth the solitary in families."

The thoughtlessness which makes a jest of the aspirations for home which find expression when love would speak between the young man and the maiden, the selfishness and sin which break up the home by divorce are most dangerous enemies to the society which God is working to create among men.

But marriage without children fails of its highest purpose. No man knows God as a man can know him till he is a father. No woman sees into the depths of the divine nature till she is taught by motherhood. The larger and nobler their characters, the more gratefully and joyfully they welcome children. What more repulsive picture is there than the woman who grudges her own child his existence, and yields to him the pain and care of motherhood only by necessity?

Jochebed — we will call her by that name, though if Scripture chronology be correct, she could not have been the immediate mother of Moses any more than Amram could have been his father — saw that her baby was fair in the sight of God (Acts 7 : 20). To bring a boy into the world then meant to doom him to speedy death, yet she welcomed her child, and her heart was glad at his beauty.

What true mother does not see that her baby is "fair unto God"? And if Jochebed's heart beat high with faith that his fairness was a sign of God's favor to him and perhaps that he was chosen to deliver his race, was it strange? Any mother may see, if she will, in the innocent eyes looking up into hers the sign of a divine purpose to do some noble service to the world through her child. That is his first appeal to her. Happy the parents who listen! All life is made nobler by receiving children as a trust from God. Every baby put into his mother's arms comes with this message from the royal household: "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

The child appealed to his parents for protection against his enemies. Helpless himself, with the whole kingdom of Egypt against him, his unconscious request for protection drove his parents to God as their only and their sufficient help. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Their faith was genuine. It did not leave their part to God. It set their wits to work, so that they obeyed the king's command (Ex. 1 : 22), while yet they saved him alive. They made a little papyrus basket-boat, safe and warm, and set it afloat among the reeds of the Nile, just at the spot where the royal princess came to bathe in the sacred waters as an act of worship. How that beautiful baby enlarged the lives of his father and mother to prayer and faith and inventive genius, and study of the ways of their rulers, and watching hope! Is there any more potent educator in the world than infancy?

II. *The child's appeal to his brothers and sisters.* It was fortunate for Miriam and Aaron as well as for Moses that they were in a family of children. One's sphere of influence is much enlarged by being born into a household

with brothers and sisters; he is himself less likely to be selfish, conceited, and morbid if there are others to divide with him the attention and care of the home. They too are better fitted to be members of society for sharing to the extent they are able in the parental joys and burdens. Miriam grew fast in judgment and discretion as she watched from a distance the little boat. Her heart must have beat high when she saw the royal party approaching along the river bank. And when the ark of bulrushes was brought to shore, the cover had hardly been taken off before the sister, quick-witted, was standing by to take advantage of every incident that might protect the life of her precious charge. At the first sign of interest and compassion in the face of Pharaoh's daughter she was ready to make the way easy to save the child's life. She knew a nurse who would care for him, and at the word "Go," she was away on flying feet to her mother. No one, after all, was more important in carrying out this plan of delivering the Hebrew race and making them a nation than Miriam.

If one would realize how large a sister's place may be, let him read the life of Caroline Herschel. Without her ministering presence would her brother William's wonderful discoveries in astronomy have been possible? In how many households the sister is next to the wife and mother in her care for all the interests of the family! From childhood she has learned the highest meanings of service. From the time the baby brother or sister has looked into her eyes she has forgotten herself for others: and no one knows how poor society would be if these unnoted sisters and aunts should be taken out of it.

Brotherly and sisterly affection, in these days so crowded with business cares or with pleasures, is too often suffered to decline. It is one of the social forces which keep society pure and sweet. The unity of the

family after its members have reached maturity is essential to the strength of the country. Patriotism dies when family ties have ceased to bind. Large sums of money sent from the United States to Europe every year at Christmas are among the most wholesome investments: and the care of immigrants to send for their relatives to share their fortunes is a cheering omen for the prosperity of the land. Filial and fraternal ties maintained are religious privileges and religious duties, and they should be so described and upheld by religious teachers. The Exodus would have been incomplete without Aaron as the high priest of the new nation and Miriam as its musical leader.

III. *The child's appeal to the stranger.* The mother of Moses knew a woman's heart when she placed her boy where the unnamed princess at regular times came to bathe in the sacred river. Worship and love to children are of near kin; for our appeal to God rests on our loneliness and helplessness and need and our likeness to him. Was not the cry of the babe Moses a prayer to the woman who had come to the river to do homage to her god? Did it not voice his loneliness and helplessness and need? And was not she who heard it both a woman with ministering instincts and a princess with royal power? If she had not had compassion when she saw the weeping babe, she would hardly have been a woman.

No appeal is stronger than that of the children themselves saying to society, "Save us." The abandoned father, whose little boy wandered after him into a saloon, and who felt, as he was carrying him home, a silent tear drop from his child's eye on his hand, had never known an argument so potent as that to renounce evil ways. But all the people have an ownership in and responsibility for the children in the community. Those who are not interested in them are hardly worthy to be trusted. Society

without children trained to righteousness is doomed. What more thrilling plea is ever heard than the cry of the homeless child in the city street, doomed, as Moses was, by inexorable law to die unless some princess has compassion on him? for the child's doom is not physical, but moral, death, and that by a contagion which is sure to spread. And who knows which of these neglected ones may be a Moses, with latent power to lead his people into freedom? The governor of one of our western states, who has stood bravely for the right amid many temptations, was once a homeless waif in New York city, rescued and sent to the West by a children's society.

Whatever the public neglects, it must take care of the children. We can survive even defective sewers and dirt left neglected in the streets, though they breed fatal diseases; but the children left uncared for in the streets of the city or out on the prairies or in the mountains will grow up into a curse from which the nation cannot recover. They must be put into homes, and homes must be purified to receive them. They must be gathered into schools, and schools must furnish, not only intellectual training, but the moral fiber which makes sturdy and trustworthy manhood and womanhood. Whatever we fail to produce as a nation, upright characters are the prime necessity. The materials are always at our hands in the coming generation; and that is a conquered country which surrenders to any obstacles, however great, its sacred trust to save the children whose unconscious appeal is in the infant's cry.

IV. *The child's appeal to God.* The race into which Moses was born was a curse on him. The country which claimed him had before his birth doomed him to die. His parents could do no more for him. They had committed him to the river and to God. But now that history has lifted the veil which then hung over that cradle among

the rushes, we see what a wealth of divine purpose guarded its treasures. We see not only the mother's heart prompting the strange plan to save her boy, but the divine mind coöperating with hers. We see the providential guidance of Pharaoh's daughter to the spot where the cradle was. We see the divine Spirit awakening compassion in her heart at the child's cry, and guiding the tongue of the anxious Miriam as she proposes to get a Hebrew nurse. One all-seeing eye beheld that strange history, from the cradle in the ark of bulrushes to the grave in the mountains of Moab, and heard not less the prayer which was only a cry than the petition of the strong man who asked to die with his people if he could not be permitted to lead them into the promised land.

This great fact gives impulse and worth to all our efforts for the children: God is not their enemy but their Friend. Whether the mother braid the rushes of her baby's boat with trembling hands, or the princess be surprised by his cry, or the young sister be watching to see what she can do to save him, God is always on the side of the child. Society and government are often against him, but God and his home fight for him. And he is on God's side. We have but to suffer the little children to come unto God and they will come. We have only to make the way open and plain.

But if society is against the child and he has no home to defend him, then the home with its sacred influences must be provided for him. The larger society must do this for its own preservation. The Church must do it that it may have deliverers from oppression, and that it may fulfill the plans of God. Christians must do it because so they will cultivate the childlike spirit which gets nearest to God and best understands him.

The babe appeals to parents to give him place and welcome and honor; to brothers and sisters to minister to

his welfare and complete the life of the home; to the stranger to respond with love to his cry of helplessness and need; and to God to extend over him his providential care and guidance, since on him hang the fortunes of the future. Happy is the country where marriage and parenthood and home life and the sense of dependence on God are kept righteous and pure by jealous guardianship, as essential to honorable character and to noble society and to civil liberty and to the maintenance of religious truth!

Albert E. Dunning.

MOSES SENT AS A DELIVERER.

EXODUS 3: 10–20.

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee."

MOSES was a shepherd. For forty years he had been tending sheep. One day when near Mount Horeb, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." Out of the bush there came a voice telling him that the time had arrived for the deliverance of his countrymen from Egyptian bondage. "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh," said the voice, "that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?"

So runs the ancient story, and the story is altogether modern. The divine proposal, the human answer; God saying, "I will send thee," man replying, "Who am I?" —all this is written in the autobiography of every soul. Pharaoh is always living. He is always oppressing God's people. God goes to this man and to that man saying, "Come now and I will send thee unto Pharaoh," and each man in turn replies, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" God expects a man to do great things. Man always marvels when he is asked to do them. God commands what seems to be impossible. The timorous soul cries, "Who am I?"

It is interesting to note how Moses squirms and wriggles in his effort to get away from the God who holds him. God's message overwhelms him. The Israelites are to be delivered. They are to be led out of Egypt. Moses is to lead them. Moses is to plead their cause at

the court of Pharaoh. No wonder the astonished shepherd sighs, "Who am I?" But God is patient with shrinking men. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." He strengthens the wavering mind of Moses with the gracious promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." But even this is not enough. Moses distrusts himself: he also distrusts his countrymen. He anticipates their questions and objections, and asks God how he is to answer them. Moses does not yet know that with God all things are possible. To every question put forth by Moses God gives a loving answer. He presses his claim. He multiplies his promises. And Moses with reluctance yields.

Moses distrusted his fitness for the task, it may be, because of his past record. He had dreamed of delivering the Israelites years before, but had ignominiously failed. It seemed to him preposterous that at the age of eighty he should be called to try again. It is seldom that old men attempt to do what they failed to do in youth. A remembered failure is a leech which sucks the blood of courage. And along with Moses' failure there was a sin which Moses had not forgotten. The memory of a sin will live through more than forty years. Moses was a criminal. He was a fugitive from justice. Criminals shrink from returning to the spot on which their crime was committed. He had buried the Egyptian in the sand, but the Egyptian was not buried. A murdered man is never buried from the eyes of the man who killed him. Through all these forty years of shepherd life, Moses, no doubt, had caught frequent glimpses of the Egyptian whose body he had buried in the sand. There was a consciousness of failure and of sin in the tremulous question, "Who am I, that I should go?"

We can sympathize with the Midian shepherd. We shrink from doing evident duties, because we feel we are

not good enough. The past rises before us and condemns us. The memory of failures robs us of our strength. There is work for God which should be done, and there are words for God which should be spoken, but the past hangs like a millstone round our neck and we cannot rise to the level of our opportunity. We shrink from high and holy work and sadly say, "Who am I, that I should go?"

Moses distrusted his own ability. He felt he lacked the very qualifications which seemed indispensable. The man who pleads a mighty cause must have — so it would seem — a silver tongue. The man who would answer questions and combat objections, and who would stir men's blood to noble enterprises, must be a man who can forge strong arguments and hurl words, as Jove hurls thunderbolts, hot and mighty. This was the very thing which Moses could not do. He was slow of speech. His tongue was clumsy. He was diffident by nature. Forty years of desert life had increased his constitutional defects. As Moses thought of the court of Pharaoh, and of his own countrymen with whom it would be necessary to plead, his heart sank within him and his shrinking soul cried out, "Who am I, that I should go?"

His experience has been ours. It often seems as though the very duty which God lays on us is the duty which we cannot do. We lack just the talent which the work demands. We are sure we could do the work which others have a chance to do, but for the work which has come to us we are totally unfitted. We pine for spheres of usefulness to which God never calls us, and stand all day idle outside the vineyard which the Master bids us enter. The Sunday-school class needs a teacher and for lack of one breaks up before our eyes. We stand by idle, because, alas! we lack the teaching talent. Our unconverted friends live their Christless life without one word

of warning from our lips, because the work of warning men is foreign to our taste. The mid-week service of praise and prayer dwindles and dies because we lack the eloquence which we foolishly deem essential. Who am I that I should teach? Who am I that I should speak? Who am I that I should do this difficult and discouraging work? Christ's followers leave many a field neglected, because they do not hear the voice which Moses heard: "Certainly I will be with thee."

Moses, moreover, was only a shepherd. Shepherds are diffident in the presence of kings. The splendor and magnificence of royal courts dazzle eyes accustomed to looking on sheep. Pharaoh stripped of his fine raiment is no more dazzling than a shepherd, but Pharaoh in court dress makes a shepherd afraid. A moneyless Pharaoh is a Pharaoh whom the humblest is brave enough to address, but a Pharaoh in possession of treasures which cannot be counted is a being whom few will dare to approach. Pharaoh away from his palace and deprived of the halo that lies round the head of a king is only a man, but Pharaoh with his scepter and crown is far above shepherds, a little lower than God. "Come now and I will send you unto Pharaoh"; and as Moses heard the words he must have thought of his coarse, cheap garments and of the sorry figure he would cut amid the glories of the palace of the king. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?"

It may be that Moses was not afraid of Pharaoh. We often are. We are afraid of bigness and of money and of rank. Men who, if they were stripped, would inspire in us no awe whatever, cow us by the robes in which they strut. Women who lack the refinement and womanhood of their servant girls dominate and lead large circles of society because of their money or their name. Customs which kill the body and destroy the soul flourish in Christian

lands, and followers of Jesus — many of them — stand impotent and dumb. Pharaoh is big and rich and influential, and the rebuke which we know he needs dies in our heart unspoken. The liquor traffic lords it over the children of God, and because of its bigness and dollars many a timid Christian says, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" A score of greedy, heartless Pharaohs are to-day robbing and trampling upon the people of God, and although the divine voice keeps saying, "Come now and I will send you unto Pharaoh," too many of us, like the Midian shepherd, draw back saying, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" We prefer the obscurity of the Midian desert to the taunts and rebuffs of Pharaoh's court.

What we need is the realization of God's abiding presence. When Moses asked God what reply he should make to the people when they asked the name of the Being under whose authority he was acting, the divine voice gave this reply: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." If the Israelites had ever heard this name of God before, they had failed to grasp its meaning. They believed in the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, but they did not believe in the God that IS. Fathers repeated to their children the stories of God's goodness manifested in the good old days long gone, but they did not teach their children of a God that fills and rules to-day. Past mercies they rejoiced in, but of present deliverance they did not dare to dream. They believed in God, but he was the God of the distant past.

It is worth remembering that when God wishes to inspire in his people a new hope and to develop in them a fresh courage he does not remind them of his majesty or his might, but of his self-existent and unchanging being. He is not at rest, but is always making himself known in

"a process of becoming." "His relation to the world is in a state of continual living activity." The Israelites had in their God a past; they are now to find in him their present and their future. In this darkest day of their degradation, when deliverance seemed absolutely hopeless, what they needed to know was not that God is mighty or that God is high and holy, but that GOD IS WITH HIS PEOPLE. I AM — this was the revelation which brought hope and strength. It revealed the Almighty by their side. It filled the present as well as the past and future with God.

And what the Israelites needed to learn we are in danger of forgetting. We, like them, are prone to place God in the past. He is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. He spake by prophets and apostles. He guided the early Christian Fathers. He was with Martin Luther and the other great reformers. Later than this it is difficult to trace him. The words of Emerson are true: "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes."

Occasionally we leave the past and dream of a God that is to be. We are going to him. We are to see him by-and-by. We are to be with him where he is. Somewhere, sometime he is to sup with us and we with him. So runs our dream. For the present we can only hope and wait.

Hence our despondency and weakness. We keep God in the past and present troubles overwhelm us. We place God in the future and postpone all reforms for coming times. We forget that I AM has sent us and hence we shrink from Pharaoh. To denounce a hoary evil seems presumptuous; to oppose a crowned custom seems audacious; to cry out against an enthroned wrong seems impertinent and useless; to attempt to make this world

God's world seems Utopian and Quixotic. And when God says, "Come now and I will send you unto Pharaoh," we stand and whimper, "Who am I?" We stay with the sheep in the Midian desert and shirk God's work at Pharaoh's court. We pride ourselves on our humility when the fact is we are unbelievers. He does not believe in God who is afraid to strike a wrong. He is an atheist — no matter what his creed may be — who does not believe that God's children can be delivered from the grip of Pharaoh. Municipal politics must remain corrupt because, forsooth, they always have been corrupt. Rum-sellers and whoremongers must always flourish because, forsooth, they always have flourished. Gambling cannot be suppressed because, forsooth, it never has been suppressed. Society must forever continue shallow and Christless because such, forsooth, it has always been.

We are impotent and worthless until we believe in a God who is with us. Praying to an absentee God robs life of strength and peace. A past God is no God. A future God cannot save. We are without hope in the world so long as we are without God, and we are without God until we find him in the Now. If we do not see him in the present, we shall never see him anywhere. God abiding with us — this is our strength and our salvation.

God is with us. To make this truth plain all the prophets lived and labored. To help us to believe it Jesus Christ was born. "And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." He lived his life in flesh to let men know that God is on the earth. As he approached the day on which he was to be taken from men's sight he assured them with an ever-deepening emphasis that though they should not see him he would be with them still. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there AM I in the midst

of them." The last sweet words that fell from his vanishing lips were, "Lo, I am with you alway."

Thus he spoke and speaks and will forever speak. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is the One which is and which was and which is to come. He has overcome the world. There are no chains which cannot be broken. There is no Pharaoh who cannot be conquered. There are no obstacles which cannot be surmounted. For God is with us. It is an old truth. To admit it is easy; to realize it is hard. Did we realize it many a sorrow would lose its sting, and many a burden would lose its weight; and many a Pharaoh with purple robe and rotten heart would cease to frighten. "Certainly I will be with thee." If our faith were but more simple, we should take him at his word, and in the presence of disaster and danger we should say with the Hebrew shepherd: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." And when forsaken by the world and left to do our duty unassisted, we should say as the Master said: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

The story of Moses and the burning bush does not serve its highest purpose unless it deepens in our heart the conviction that God is with us. We need this great truth daily. Whenever the outlook seems dark and Pharaoh seems too fierce to face, and our heart quails at the sight of tasks which God imposes, let us think of the strength of him who in the desert said to a timid shepherd, "Certainly I will be with thee," and who centuries later comforted a discouraged people with the calm assurance, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," and who in the fullness of time became flesh that he might syllable with human lips the truth which is our strength and hope and life, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *Charles E. Jefferson.*

THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED.

EXODUS 12: 1–14.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying," etc.

IN this passage (v. 14) it is said of the passover that it was to be kept for a memorial forever. It has been kept for almost thirty-five hundred years. The Lord's Supper represents an ordinance which was instituted nearly fifteen hundred years before the Christian era. This passage in the twelfth chapter of Exodus gives an account of the preparations for it at the time of its institution. They were simple. A lamb or a kid was selected. It was not to be over a year old. On a given day it was to be killed. Its blood was to be sprinkled in the doorways of the houses or tents of the Hebrews. The body was to be cooked with fire (that is, roasted, not stewed or boiled), and on the night of the appointed day was to be eaten entire. Bread without yeast, and bitter herbs completed the simple passover meal.

It was called the passover because on this memorable night the angel of God passed through the land of Egypt and smote with death the firstborn child of every Egyptian home, from the palace of Pharaoh to the hut by the Nile, and also the firstborn of beasts, including especially the sacred animals, the "gods" of Egypt, but passed over the houses of the Hebrews wherever he saw the blood upon the doors. The passing through was placed in contrast with the passing over. The one was in judgment, the other was in mercy. As a secondary meaning of the word passover, the Hebrews passed over the Red Sea and over Jordan and were redeemed out of Egypt.

This institution made a new and remarkable date for the Hebrew race. It was made the introduction of their sacred year in distinction from the civil year which began in September.

We understand that the passover was instituted as it was described to Moses and Aaron; that the prescribed order was followed; that the blood was sprinkled upon the lintels and uprights of the doors; that the death angel passed through the land as it was foretold; that he smote the Egyptians in that awful night, and the land was filled with the dead; that he passed over the Hebrew dwellings; that the feast prescribed was eaten, household by household; that the people, after a hasty meal partaken standing and girded for a march, marched out under the leadership of Moses and rendezvoused on the borders of the Red Sea and crossed it; which the Egyptians attempting to do were drowned; and that thus was inaugurated the passover, thenceforth to be kept as a memorial forever.

There were features in the preparation for the passover which were temporary. The rabbins remark four such features; namely, the taking up of the lamb on the tenth day, four days before the feast; the eating by households; the sprinkling of the blood upon the doorways; and the eating in a standing position and in haste. Those were not essential, but accidental features. They pertained to the observance as kept in that first night. They are now only of historic interest.

There were still other features which, as typical, were fulfilled once for all in Jesus Christ. He is our Passover. They were fulfilled on the cross. He shed there the redeeming blood — the passover blood once for all. The passover was killed probably at two o'clock or three o'clock in the afternoon, "between the evenings." At this time also, "about the ninth hour," the heart of the

Saviour was pierced and he cried, "It is finished." Our passover Lamb was chosen and was offered once. This was sufficient. As offered upon Calvary, once for all, he is our Passover.

As there are features in the passover preparation which were peculiar to its institution, to its first celebration; and as there are features which were fulfilled once for all in Jesus Christ, so there are features which are permanent, which make this in the Scripture passage before us a living subject: the preparation of the passover.

I. As a preparation for our passover we should have, as the Hebrews had, a sense of the need of a passover. They were in Egypt. How should they escape? Only by a redemption. The passover expressed their redemption. If they could have a passover provided, the Red Sea would offer no obstruction to them, the Egyptians would not be able to prevent them, the angel of death would pass by the Hebrew houses. Moses and Aaron realized this need. This was the significance of the lamb and of all the circumstances of the passover feast. It was the need of redemption. We need a redemption. What shall protect our homes from the angel of death? What shall make a safe passage for us over the Red Sea of our judgment and everlasting death? The Lord is our Passover. In our preparation this should always be an element: the fostering anew of the sense of need of the redemption expressed by the bread and the wine, the body and the blood of the Lamb of God.

This fact of need is the foremost fact in the condition of an unredeemed world. The supply of this need is the foremost fact in the condition of a world provided with a passover. The passover made a date for the Hebrews. Its institution inaugurated a sacred year. The sacrifice of our Saviour made a date for the human race. It marks the beginning of a sacred year. We make our era date

from the advent. The true date is from the cross, unless we remember to associate the cross with the cradle. Redemption was the great, conspicuous fact in the story of the chosen people. With a redemption provided they ceased to be a rabble of slaves in hopeless bondage. They found liberty and life and a national destiny.

Redemption is the great conspicuous fact in the history of mankind. From the cross we date deliverance from sin and death and hell, the liberty of sons of God, the entrance upon a great destiny as a holy nation. As a process of preparation we should renew our relation to the crucifixion as the central event from which we date the beginning of months forever.

II. The preparation of the Hebrews was by households, and, as an enlargement of this idea, by neighborhoods. So our preparation for the Lord's Supper should be by households. The father took the lamb and set it apart. He slew it and put the blood upon the doorposts. He represented the family — his wife, his children, his servants. This to the Hebrews was a familiar idea: that there was a priesthood in the home. The father was the priest at the family altar. He was accountable for more than himself — for his family also, and, beyond this, for the family of his neighbor. A legend tells of a sick child in the passover night saying to his father, "The death angel is coming. Is the blood on the doorway?" If it was not, the father, above all the household, was liable for the fatal consequences. The preparation for the passover puts to the family, to every family, this question, and puts it especially to the head of the family: "Is the blood of the Lord's lamb on your doorposts? Are you, are your children, are your servants, are your guests, sheltered by the blood? Are your neighbors sheltered by the blood? Are you allowing anything else to tempt you to excuse or justify yourself in vacating your place as a father, as a husband, as a neighbor and a friend?"

How many of us are doing everything for our children but the most important thing of all possible or conceivable things: securing for them at our utmost care the shelter of the Saviour's redeeming blood? And, to the most of us, what is our sense of any special religious obligations of neighborhood? Men think of the sacramental emblems without hearing the injunction to share them with our neighbors, those in Christian fellowship with us, those who may be brought into this immortal fellowship.

III. The passover was to be prepared for by the putting away of sin. The bitter herbs and the unleavened bread were symbolical. The bitterness of the hyssop expressed penitence for sin and cleansing from it. The putting of leaven, or yeast, out of the house expressed the careful searching review of the life, the renewed rejection of all evil and doubtful practices, renewed separation from the world, in so far as it is worldly, the seeking anew of a closer walk with God. The passover might be partaken unworthily, and so would be a source of condemnation. The Lord's Supper may be partaken unworthily so as to be a cause of condemnation. Religion is not a form. The blood of Jesus Christ has no magical efficacy. It was necessary to have blood on the doorways, but not less necessary was it to have a sanctified people to be sheltered by it, sanctified in body and in life; the house, and each soul within it, set in order for the coming of the Lord. Hence the stress placed upon preparation, alike for the Hebrew passover and for the Christian sacrament.

Still God repeats to us his ancient direction: "Sanctify yourselves." A holy communicant, a holy church should ever be found when we come to the Lord's table.

IV. The blood was to be looked upon by the people, and so placed, therefore, that it would be visible. The token was to be accepted by the Hebrew. It was not

enough that the provision was made. It must be availed of. It might be neglected or despised. In the passover provision the flesh of the lamb was to be eaten. The acceptance of God's passover was thus twofold: the sprinkling of the blood and the passover meal. The father might sprinkle the blood, but each member of the family must partake of the feast that followed.

The communion celebration is a personal expression. We set forth the elements. We uncover them. We see, as it were, the blood in the doorway. The Church thus, as it were, sprinkles her side posts and lintels. The protecting blood is visible. But the lamb must also be partaken. In the Lord's Supper we declare: We accept God's merciful provision. We take the Lord Jesus Christ as for us the Lamb of God.

V. The blood was to be looked to, also, by God: not by the Hebrews only, but by God. It was to be so placed that it would be visible to the angel. When he looked upon the blood he passed over the protected house. The Lord would see it as taken from the altar and put upon the door. He could see it upon the altar. He would see it, he must see it, upon the door. This made it availing. It is not enough for us to see it. God must be reconciled. The whole gospel is summed up just here: "Where I see the blood, I will pass over." "Blood! blood! this is the one cry of the gospel, the alpha and omega of the gospel. Is man redeemed? It is because we have redemption through His blood! Are any ransomed from sin? Not by corruptible things, as silver and gold, are they purchased, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Are these justified? 'Being justified by his blood.' Are these cleansed and made holy? The blood cleanseth from all sin. Are sinners cast off at last to eternal death? It is because they have trampled under foot the blood of the

Son of God. Thus, in the gospel revelations, all mercy, compassion, and grace of God have their ground in that blood. All conviction of sin, all holy desires and emotions in the soul, all struggle to overcome sin, as all hope and trust and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost come from the blood."

VI. Finally, in the passover, there was a look backward and a look forward, at its institution and during all the centuries in which it was observed. The backward look was to Egypt and bondage. The forward look was to the promised land and to full and final redemption.

A thoughtful preparation revived ever the story of their hard years of servitude and their despair, of the advent of Moses and his wonderful story, of the plagues, of the passover night, the darkness, the great cry, the night march, the crossing of the sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, the song of Miriam, the pillars of cloud and fire. And it gave the forward look to the coming of the prophesied Redeemer.

So at the sacrament we ever look backward along the great line of the history of redemption: we look back to this night in Egypt, and the Hebrews' deliverance; to the Advent, to the institution of the Lord's Supper, to Calvary; and we look forward to the completion of the great redemption, when we shall sit with the Lord again, the visible head of his Church, the marks of sacrificial glory upon him; when his hand shall again be upon the table with us; when again he shall pass to us the bread and the wine, and partake with us; and when he shall give out once more the jubilant sacramental hymn as with him we lift

> The shout of them that triumph,
> The song of them that feast.

George R. Leavitt.

PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

EXODUS 14: 19–29.

"And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

WE have recently been told that the Old Testament is obsolete; that because we have the New Testament with its glorious record of the life of Jesus Christ and its wonderful principles for the guidance of the thought and deed of the world, we could well do without the old book of God; it is a curiosity and nothing more. Years ago one of the saints affirmed, "The New Testament is enfolded in the Old, the Old Testament is unfolded in the New"; and recently one of the most vigorous and earnest men of the Church has affirmed that the Bible is like a magnificent cathedral which was twelve or fifteen hundred years in building. The Old Testament is the nave of the cathedral, with its side aisles; the Gospel is the choir, the Fourth Gospel being the very sanctuary; while the Epistles and Apocalypse are the adjuncts to the building which reveal its beauty, truth, and majesty.

What is it in the Old Testament, besides its devotional character, which makes it worthy to find a place in our religious living? What is it in the foundation of a building which gives it worth after the superstructure has been erected? If the books of the Bible are bound together with no golden thread of continuity, if they stand simply one by one, isolated and alone, then it may possibly be true that we have no need of those books which tell us of the world before the time of the crucified and risen Christ. But if every idea and thought in the Word of God, begin-

ning with the opening chapters of Genesis, finds its consummation in the closing chapters of Revelation; if there is an increasing purpose of God, and his Word is the record and revelation of that increasing purpose, then it must be that the old Book shall make its appeal to our lives, not simply because of the devotional use we may make of it, but in the revelation it shall give us of this grand and continued and ever-widening purpose of God with relation to the sons and daughters of humanity; then surely the Old Testament is valuable not for its isolated incidents, but for the ideas that are eternal which reveal themselves in those incidents and of which these are but the clothing.

Let us see if we can emphasize this truth with relation to the incident of our text. What was it? A scene in the midnight, in the midst of a fierce storm; the flight of a disabled rabble, the pursuit of a selfish monarch, his death, the destruction of his army, and the liberation of a helpless people by the power of God through the hand of one of his chosen servants. That is the story in a word. That is the incident; the value of it residing not simply in itself but in the grand ideas which rest beneath. And what are these?

First, we have revealed in the experience of the children of Israel the disaster of overreaching power. We have the lesson, in a picture, that any power which addresses itself to selfish ends must sooner or later meet its disaster and its defeat. It is a lesson, not only for the children of Israel, but for those of us who are living in the world of the present. No boy has ever read Vanity Fair without finding a secret rejoicing in his soul at the issue of that fight between Mr. Cuff and Dobbin. Cuff was the bully of the school. He was of wealthy parentage and had always had his own way. He had made a fag out of a poor half-sized little fellow, and had been

compelling him by his cruelty to do his bidding. One day, on the campus, he was chastising the boy because of some mistake made in serving him, when Dobbin, the son of the grocer, approached Mr. Cuff and asked him to desist. Whereupon Cuff left the little fellow and attempted to flog Dobbin, with the result that he himself was completely and soundly thrashed, and was put in the position which he deserved to occupy before the school. The fellow had been defeated, and was shown not worthy to hold his place as leader.

Now what is it that makes a boy see the justice of that defeat? What is it but precisely this truth we are emphasizing, that the justice of humanity knows that when power overreaches itself for selfish ends it is always bound, in the long run, to meet its disaster, and when that disaster comes there are none so poor as to do it reverence? It is a truth, not only of the playground, it is a truth of the wide relationships of life. The nation which has power, wealth, authority, and which uses these for the purposes of despotism over her own people, or of tyranny over her weaker brothers and sisters in the world, is the nation which will inevitably see the day of its defeat and overthrow. Apparent strength is not, and never can be, real strength; and when any people, no matter how highly favored of God, use the blessings which have been conferred upon them, first of all for their own selfish ends, that nation will find its desert. What did Pharaoh care for the slaves who were fleeing from his land? Nothing save this, that they made good servants for his cupidity. What difference did it make to him what should happen to them if only he could bind the shackles so strongly about them that they should be made to minister to his own desires? The very fact that first of all he was seeking his own interest was the fact that made it meet that, in the providence of God, he and

all his host should be drowned in the depths of the Red Sea.

We ourselves, as a people who are strong and prosperous, have relationships to-day with races which, weaker than ourselves, appeal to our sympathy for aid, for strength. We have the black man in his cabin in the South; we have the red man, the original proprietor of these United States of America, in the West; we have the Chinaman everywhere, — weaker races of the earth touching us in our strength, and asking for what? Not that we manipulate them for our own selfish ends, but that we act toward them the part of Christian brothers. What is to be the history of this land of ours in the next quarter of a century? The history of America will be determined by the relationships which she sustains toward the weaker races, by the way in which she uses them, whether for her own advantage, exclusively, or for the Christian ends of a paternal interest.

There is a legend that just before the waters engulfed Pharaoh he lifted up his voice and cried out mightily: "I believe in the God of Israel." And he is not the first nor will he be the last king of men who, after he shall have misused the powers God has given him for the developing of the weaker life of the races dependent on him for protection, as he stands face to face with his disaster, in the justice of the judgment which God passes upon him, shall exclaim: "I believe in the God of Israel." Overreaching power, whether exerted by nations or individuals, always ends in disaster.

But there is a second principle which is revealed in this incident of the life of the children of Israel, and that is the very clear revelation of the position which God sustains to his people. God was not upon the side of the great legions; God was not upon the side of the majority; he cared not for Pharaoh with his six hundred

chariots and his horses. He cared for the two million abandoned, forgotten, downtrodden men who were in flight before the monarch of strength.

If you will read your Bible carefully, you will find that God is always upon the side of his children in need. Was it not so in the Old Testament days? For whom had he the manna and the quail? Not for the Philistines who were powerful, but for the children of Israel who were helpless. For whom had he ravens to bring bread and flesh in the morning and evening? It was not for any monarch in his palace, but for his own lonely servant in the wilderness. Upon whom did Jesus Christ look with compassion in those days of his earthly pilgrimage? Was it upon the exceptional people whose lives were differentiated from the life of the world, or do we read that when he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion upon them? For the sake of whom were the great majority of his mighty works performed? Were they for those who had resources in themselves and in their associations, or for the poor, the obscure, the downtrodden in the world?

If there is any one truth that looks out from the book of God, it is that his sympathy and help have always been exerted toward his children in need; that when they have found themselves face to face with some great barrier of selfishness and greed that the world has erected, God has parted the waters of the sea, God has revealed his arm, strong and mighty. You say that special providences are things of the past. I tell you they are blessed realities in the world of the present. God is busy to-day in his world. God is concerned to-day with the molding of what you and I call the under crust of society.

It has been said that the great need of the world to-day is an enthusiasm for humanity. What does that mean? It means that the favored classes of life will find their

highest privilege in looking at the world for which Christ died, through the eyes of Christ, and ministering to the world for which Christ lived as Christ himself ministered. In the most magnificent church of a great city, the other evening, a noble man uttered this trenchant statement: "No church can hope to succeed in the world of the present which declines the lowliest service to humanity." The business of the Church of Christ to-day is to follow in the footsteps of the Master. The highest mission which by any possibility can be conferred upon the Church of the Master is to go out into the highways and hedges where Jesus himself spent his life, and, seeking not to be ministered unto but to minister, give the gospel with free hand to those who need it, to those who are perishing for want of it. Our generation sets up many a false god, our generation has many a false idea of the mission of the Church of God, and cherishes it; but it is the *true* God who is working in society to-day, and it is the true Church which, discerning the spirit of the true God, and hearing his call, seeks in obedience to his command to do his bidding.

There is one other principle which looks out upon us as we contemplate this incident in the life of the children of Israel, and that is the idea of progress. You remember that in the text the statement is made that after the children of Israel had seen what the Lord did with the Egyptians they feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord. Had they not believed in him before? you ask. Yes; but it was with a flickering belief. Their faith would not be true and strong in the days that were before them, there were still to be murmurings, there were still to be turnings away from the God who had delivered them, but there was an idea of God which found its way into their hearts which came to them to be the expanding power of their lives. There was an idea of God which captured

and which gradually grew more and more strong in its possession of their souls until it made them that peculiar people whose one distinguishing characteristic among the nations of the world is that they had a conception and idea of God which was superior to that of any other nation upon the face of the earth.

What is progress in the life of a soul, in the life of a nation? Is it simply separating one's self from former conditions? It was not progress, so far as the children of Israel were concerned, that upon that dark and stormy night they crossed over the Red Sea and placed its boiling waters between themselves and the continent on which they had served four hundred and thirty years in slavery. It was not progress that, instead of the simple fare which they had had in those old days, there was given to them the quail and the manna. That is not the essence of progress. You cannot cause a race or an individual to advance in the scale of being simply by changing the conditions, the environment. You can only build up a life, a nation, you can only have real, true, genuine progress as some heaven-born idea gets possession of human life, individual or national, and works itself out in the midst of the conditions and environments that are about that life. The very essence of progress is ever and always a change of character.

A man does not become a more beautiful artist simply because he covers this year a larger canvas with paint than he covered last year, or because his brushes to-day are three times as large as they were then, or because his studio has been taken from the country and has been set up in the midst of the city. A man only becomes increasingly an artist as the artist-idea takes hold of his soul and leaves itself in his life.

A man does not become a better Christian by associating himself with a larger and more influential body of

those who follow in the footsteps of the Master. A man only increases in godliness as some idea with relation to God, powerful and growing, gets its grasp and its grip upon his own soul and pushes that soul out toward God and not away from him.

The latest book upon ethics by a professor of Boston University declares that there is such a thing as conventional ethics and conventional conscience in the world: that the multitude of people are linked by conventional conscience, but that the true leaders of society and of life are those who see increasingly a moral ideal, and who step boldly forward in front of the great following world and beckon it up onto the heights of morality they have realized, not by an intellectual but by a spiritual progression. That is progress. The men who have stood forth in the history of the world and boldly have taken their stand by the side of Christ against the conventionalities of life, those have been, ever and always, the men who have left upon the world the mark of their dignity and power. Such a man was Moses as he stood in front of the children of Israel with the rod in his hand. Such a man was Isaiah. Such men were the twelve apostles who stood side by side with Jesus Christ, preferring to suffer affliction with him rather than to find their ease and pleasure in the world. Paul and Savonarola and Luther were such men. Nor is the age in which you and I are living devoid of its heroes, of men and women who hear a voice speaking to them which the majority of men do not hear, men and women who see a state of society about them that needs a remedy when neither the state nor the remedy has been discerned by the world at large. These are the people who, stepping forth in the light which they have received, are the real motive force of life. They are not only the leaders of society, but are in a real sense those who mark and inspire the progress of the world.

Yes; the Old Testament has value for us, not simply because of the incidents that are recorded therein, but because of the ideas, pregnant and strong, which are there displayed. Have we learned the lesson that the use of power in selfish, overreaching fashion will lead to disaster for our own personal souls? We have learned a lesson, then, that shall ever make that incident of the children of Israel passing through the Red Sea vital in our lives. Have we an increasing perception of the truth that God is on the side of the masses, and that it is the business of God's children to be in the thick of the fight where God himself is? Then we shall have seen in this incident something which will give potency to our own lives. Have we discerned that any progress which is true and real is attained by reason of some idea of God which having taken possession of our souls fills us with enthusiasm? Then we shall have learned in this old story something which shall be a help to us. And God help us that in this world which is so full of questions to be solved, which is calling for true-hearted, sacrificial endeavor, you and I be not behind our privilege, that you and I be not in arrear of our debt, but, standing side by side with God, we bravely and persistently and continually walk in the vanguard of his army.

Nehemiah Boynton.

THE ANOINTED KING.

PSALM 2: 1–12.

"Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?" etc.

THIS psalm, or ancient people's worship song, tells of a mighty King, against whom the nations raged and the peoples imagined a vain thing, but who was, nevertheless, set up in royal state upon the holy hill of Zion. Great power was given to this King and it was said of him that he should break the nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Kings are entreated to be wise, and judges to be instructed; to serve with fear and to rejoice with trembling; to do homage — for that is the meaning of the phrase "kiss the Son" — lest they perish from the way when his wrath is kindled. All who put their trust in him are pronounced blessed.

What difference can it make to a man now living in this busy active world where there is so much going on, whether this King was or was not set up in royal state upon the holy hill of Zion? What have we to do with him, even though he was throned and crowned? What difference could it have made ages ago to any one of the multitudes dwelling in Babylon or India or Egypt that a Hebrew King was crowned on a Hebrew hill? What difference can it make to-day to any one of the multitudes coming and going on the earth, whether this King centuries ago was or was not set up in royal state on the holy hill of Zion?

Why should a young man full of pride and strength care for this ancient King, against whom the nations raged and the peoples imagined a vain thing? Why

should an old man ready to perish, and with neither pride nor strength, put his trust in one who once ruled with a rod of iron, and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel? What difference could it have made centuries ago, when the song was written, and what difference can it make now? Why should men put their trust in him? What blessing can come upon those who do? Is it not true that

> All the kings of the nations lie in glory;
> Cased in cedar and shut in a sacred gloom;
> Swathed in linen and precious unguents old;
> Painted with cinnabar and rich with gold?

Why, then, should we do homage to this departed greatness, or put trust in the Hebrew King, against whom rulers in his own day took counsel, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us"?

The hill of Zion is a very little hill and far away, hidden in the heart of a provincial country. There are so many other events which might have been mentioned. Rome was yet to sit upon her seven hills, as mistress of the world. There were mighty kings then in Babylon and Nineveh and among the ancient pyramids of Egypt. Why should we be told of this King in Zion?

It is certainly a fact, — we remark in passing, — upon which all would do well to pause and ponder, that the one King of all kings, who has left behind the deepest impression of himself on all later ages as the wisest and best and mightiest King who ever lived and reigned over men, should have been this one who was seated in royal state on the holy hill of Zion.

What happens to men who do render homage to this King in Zion, and what happens to those who do not render such homage? What happens to those who put their trust in him and to those who break his bands asunder? The question is a perfectly fair one and may

be expanded, till we ask what happens to a whole world full of men and women; to nations and peoples and kindreds and tongues and tribes according as they do or do not serve this King with fear, and rejoice with trembling?

The question sends us at once to history. What has, in fact, happened to the world and in the world since men began to accept in a poor, halting, half-hearted fashion the royal authority of the King who was crowned on his Hebrew hill?

No one can doubt that we are living in a wonderful age, and that we are looking back through eighteen wonderful centuries upon wonderful history. Making all proper allowance for what was splendid and imperial in former ages; for all the grand things conceived and done in the antediluvian world and in the patriarchal world and in the Egyptian and Assyrian and Roman and Grecian worlds; and giving those centuries their full share and meed of glory and renown, it can hardly be questioned by candid and thoughtful men that the last eighteen centuries are, by all odds, the most illustrious centuries through which our race has passed from the beginning.

Nations have emerged from darkness; new forms of civilization have been elaborated; mighty kingdoms and governments have been built up; freedom and equality have been extended; democratic laws have prevailed; civil institutions, schools, colleges, asylums almost without number have been founded; a whole new world has appeared, of which, if we cannot say it is a world wherein dwelleth righteousness, and in which the kingdom of God has come, we can say that it is full of promise and potency; that it shows signs everywhere and is a world where the kingdom of God is coming, coming more and more every day, and in which righteousness and peace are every year growing stronger and more triumphant.

The bright morning which began to dawn eighteen hundred years ago, when an old prophet in the temple on Zion said, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" — the morning which began to dawn when those words were spoken has steadily grown brighter and brighter, even if it has not yet reached perfect day.

Now, if we trace back this wonderful history to its beginning, follow back the lines along which the development of society, the unfolding of kingdoms and nations, as well as individual character, have moved, we shall find them converging, drawing closer and closer together, till at last they gather about and center upon the familiar and holy form and face of that King who appeared in Zion, both as the Son of God and as the Son of man; who stood before Pilate and talked with him; who rested his royal rights on testimony to the truth, and said to the Roman magistrate, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

This is what has happened to a whole world full of men and women who hail with their hosannas and palm branches the King of truth, seated once, and seated still, on the holy hill of Zion. Christendom has happened. A new heavens and a new earth have happened. Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will to men have happened, and are more and more happening since men partially and faintly welcomed the advent of the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

What happens to the individual man when he accepts the rule and authority of the King who was crowned in Zion? It would be natural and reasonable to infer that a sovereignty which had worked such mighty and benefi-

cent changes in the life of nations and in the history of the world would also work great and important changes in personal character and on individual hearts.

This claim, if it were made, would be sustained by facts. Facts show that men who love and obey the King of Zion are made better and stronger, and sometimes made almost infinitely better and stronger. The pages of history shine with glowing and luminous examples of the transformations wrought in those who worship the glorious King. They become new men and speak of themselves as new creatures living in a new heaven and a new earth. They show a new and often an unearthly spirit which burns brightly in the world like a torch, and throws out rays like a beacon over the dark places of the earth. Such men become themselves kings, like the blessed King, and let their light so shine in the world that others, seeing their good works, glorify the Father who is in heaven.

But we may put the question in another form: What happens to a man, especially to a young man, full of hope and promise and ambition, when he sets before himself the very noblest and highest ideal?

What is the effect of such an ideal upon his own character? What happens to an artist who resolves that he will be the pupil only of great masters in painting? What happens to the student in literature who resolves that he will draw inspiration and life, not from any of the lesser fountains which have been opened in the world, but that he will draw inspiration and life from the mighty and inexhaustible fountains which pour forth in copious and abundant streams from the great masters of poetry; that he will study these masters and drink in deep draughts of the lofty thought and holy feeling which dwell in their works?

Notice that such a student is something more than a

copyist, and that he does something more than accept these writers as models. Have you never taken a play of Shakespeare and read it and re-read it, and studied it line by line and almost word by word, and brought to bear upon it all the information you could collect with the whole force of your own mental power; and read everything written about it that you could lay your hands upon, and then once more returned to the play itself and read it all over again, and perhaps again? If you have done this, you know what it is to have a great author become something more than a model; something more than a copy to be imitated or to be weighed and measured in cold blood. You have felt a fine, strange, unwonted life throbbing and surging in your heart; a life larger than your own, thrilling you and filling you with new and lofty emotions — and this life is the life of the poet in you, possessing you and reasserting itself once more on the earth centuries after his bones have been dust.

This is what happens to a student of literature who sets resolutely before himself, or rather who takes unreservedly into himself the highest and noblest ideal, and lets it do in himself its whole and glorious work. Everyone must have noticed that ordinary men in the company of bright and gifted persons will sometimes shine with a borrowed but brilliant light. They outdo themselves and surprise themselves. They surprise their friends.

If, then, this is what happens to a man in the lower range of literature or art or music when he heartily and unresistingly abandons himself to the beneficent power of some lofty ideal or noble genius, in what words can we tell what happens to the man who yields himself wholly up to the mightiest personality of all the ages in the lofty region of spiritual life? Such a man is molded and transformed by this mighty personality. We can only say in language that perhaps seems a little strained, Heaven

happens to him! Eternal life happens to him! God happens to him!

The change which comes over his spirit and thought and hope and life may be compared to that which came over the unfortunate demoniac who had been dwelling in the tombs and crying and cutting himself, when he was found, obedient to the word of Jesus, sitting clothed and in his right mind; or it may be compared to that of the prodigal son who had been feeding the swine and longing for the husks in his great hunger, when he came to himself and said, "I will arise and go to my father."

Millions of men in all ages of the world have passed through these changes and have felt in their souls these things happening to them. They have lived pure and lofty lives here on the earth, and have risen above themselves and above others. The change is often so great that men take knowledge of them that they have been with one who is a King. To be with him is to be like him — as calm, as wise, as strong, as helpful as he was. "But we all," they say, "with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

Men may say what they will; they may argue and reason and hesitate and stammer, but the fact remains that something new and different came into the world and still comes into the world when men bow down in adoring reverence before the King on his holy hill of Zion.

A new elixir flows in the veins of men. A divine prophecy whispers in the human heart. A light, such as never shone on sea or shore, flashes out over earthly habitations. The people sitting in darkness see this great light and become children of the light. The noblest kind of national destiny comes to men through some great character. The colored people found freedom in Abraham

Lincoln, and the nations of the earth have found freedom and life in the mighty King. Every other king is crowned with finer dignity because of the one supreme King.

Because these things have happened, and are still happening more and more, both to individual men and to nations, peoples, kindreds, tongues, and tribes, therefore the enemies of man are in derision; all oppressions and wickedness shall be broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. This song is a song of infinite hope and joy. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. Right is to triumph. Injustice and anarchy are to flee out of the earth, calling on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. No man who loves his kind would soften one word of the denunciation. The ungodly are to perish. Plagues, pestilences, and revolutions are the sure signs of the Son of man, who is also the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is uttering with his voice the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God against all workers of iniquity. The fire of heaven shall fall and burn till stubble is consumed. The King will reappear in every godlike man. In his name the humble become heroes. The whole earth will join in one wide triumphant shout: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest!"

Edward Beecher Mason.

THIRD QUARTER.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

LUKE 2: 1–16.

"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus," etc.

INTO the edifice of our knowledge of the life of Christ upon the earth, as given in the New Testament, there are four porticoes of entrance. It is interesting to note what kind of a literary gateway each one of the four Evangelists builds for his entrance into the subject.

Mark has the simplest and plainest of the four. Without any reference to the eternal ages, the preëxistence of Christ, the previous earthly circumstances of the parentage of our Lord, he writes at once "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." He opens but a one-leafed door through the prophet Isaiah, and then, with a brief reference to John the Baptist, tells us how Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to be baptized of John. Matthew builds a stately portico in "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," and informs us concerning Joseph and the divine revelation in dreams, the coming of the wise men, and the trickery of Herod. John lifts us up at once into the eternity past, takes us to the bosom of the Father, shows us the eternal Logos, and then tells of Jesus and his disciples and the Word made flesh, who is the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. Luke, with the orderly method of a precise literary scholar and a scientific man, tells of Elisabeth and Zacharias, the annunci-

ation of Gabriel to the Virgin, makes his pages gleam with the poetry and song from the lips of Mary and the prophecy of Zacharias, and then, after giving an insight into the political and social procedure of the time, shows us the infant Jesus honored of the angels and admired of the shepherds.

Let us look at Luke's narrative and see how much of human interest it contains. Luke was a physician, a man of science and manifold knowledge gained from study, observation, scrutiny, comparison, and reflection. He saw much of the inner life of both men and women. He had the intimate knowledge which the family physician has of the hereditary and physical traits and the influence of environment upon both body and mind. He was a scholar and an author, fully appreciative of the niceties of language, and with a skill of the pen that makes words pictures. With so fine an artistic and dramatic sense that he was, in tradition at least, an artist, his pages sparkle with touches of truth such as occur only in real life or on the pages of the fiction writers of loftiest genius. He was a citizen of the Roman empire, and by public experience and wide travel knew the various kinds of human nature in that "great world" which was the Empire of Rome. He was a Gentile, most probably of Antioch, Syria, or at least not a Jew, and, as St. Paul says, "not of the circumcision." He joined Paul at Troas, and shared that wonderful journey prompted by Paul's vision of the man at Macedonia which brought Christianity into Europe. He was in all probability a father, and experienced in household and domestic life, having that closest touch with human nature without which the most accomplished man is sadly lacking. In a word, he was well fitted in the providence of God to arrange, in systematic form and exquisitely beautiful literary dress, the narratives, incidents, and traditions of the apostles and disciples

of Jesus. Every page of his Gospel shows that he was accustomed to go to original authorities for his information; and, moved by the Spirit of God and guided aright, he has given us the story which we are now to study.

That portion at which we look to-day, which throughout the ages has been part of the gospel for Christmas as read in the churches, may be conveniently examined in three parts. The highest gift from heaven is shown in the first seven verses; the first gospel upon earth is announced from the eighth to the twelfth verse, while from the thirteenth to the sixteenth we find heaven and earth united in celebrating the Nativity.

The "dogma," or decree, goes out from Cæsar Augustus that "all civilization," in the phrase of the time, which meant the Roman empire, should be enrolled or written down. The first requisite in the foundation of a good government is a right system of taxation. Revenue is the prime necessity for assured and permanent political existence. Our Revolutionary finances were as bad as they were because our fathers did not like systematic taxation.

So, in order that the enrollment shall be both thorough and just, the name of every inhabitant of the various countries composing the "inhabited" world, or civilization, must be written down. "This," writes Luke, "was the first enrollment made, when Quirinius was governor" of the collected provinces, of which Galilee and Judæa were parts. Projected long before Quirinius actually entered office, it was carried out in his time, which happened when the Christian Church was well established, and of which we read in the Book of Acts.

This autocratic decree of the emperor at Rome carried a good deal of inconvenience to every family in Galilee and Judæa. It meant that no matter where a Jewish family might be living the head of the household

must go to the city in which he was born to be enrolled. In our days it is easy enough with lightning express trains for the native of Maine or Nebraska to leave his duties in the District of Columbia to go home and vote; but in the times of Joseph and Mary it was no light journey for Joseph to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, which was still called by sweet and tender remembrances "the City of David." True, it did not resemble a Davidic city at this time, when a Roman garrison was established in the town, but the old traditions were strong and the history was clear. Joseph was of the clan and lineage of David, and he must be enrolled in the place called his ancestral habitation.

Making the journey with Mary, his betrothed wife, to Bethlehem, he there found the caravansary already filled with the numerous households and taxpayers. Probably in no very good humor, these people, who hated with rancorous bitterness their oppressors, and considered the publican or tax-collector as low as a beast, were assembled in readiness for the disagreeable work which was before them. So, finding no room in the usual place of shelter, the young maid, about to become a mother, and Joseph were compelled to seek refuge in the place temporarily vacated by the cattle. While living in the stall, with nothing but clean straw for a place of rest, her firstborn Son was brought forth. Away from the conveniences and comforts of home, there was no clothing for the little one, but such wrappings as could be extemporized for the occasion. No showering congratulations of friends or kind neighbors were there to cheer the mother; no dainty gifts made by delicate and loving hands for the helpless little stranger were at hand to make beautiful and fairy-like the mother's boudoir; no cradle with its snowy coverlets was in readiness. And so, the child and the Heir of Eternity, the root and the offspring of David, no better

arrayed than the Indian's papoose or the child born in the mountain hut, was laid in the ox's crib.

The time of the Saviour's birth fell in one of those interludes of calm, fair weather in the usually rainy season of Palestine. The shepherds are watching over their flock by night. It may be, as Milton tells us in his Ode on the Nativity, —

> Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
> Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

But in a moment an angel of God came upon them, and they were summoned to think grander thoughts and to give heed to a message, indeed, of love, but love surpassing that of human lover or maid or mother or father. The glory of the Lord blazed around them like a lamp, and, as is always the case before the great manifestations of natural phenomena or the wonderful works of God, their spirits were at first filled with fear. It was not merely like that of the Indian, who bows before the flash of lightning and hears in the rolling thunder the voice of a Power greater than himself. It was rather the chastened fear of Peter, who, seeing the great draught of fishes brought forth at the command of Jesus, fell down before him saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And so when it is stated, as the original narrative says, that "they feared great fear," it was to their credit. Such fear is purifying. Yet how sweetly to their ears must have sounded the words, "Do not fear, for behold, I bring to you good tidings of great joy." This in itself was enough to arouse their curiosity and to delight their hearts. But with that prophetic strain which belongs to all the old announcements of the good purpose which God had toward all the nations of the earth, but which the Jews, meanly arrogating their meaning unto Israel alone, had long ago forgotten, the angel further

said "which shall yet be to all the people." Every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue through this angelic announcement is assured of the blessing which is yet to rest upon them, because the Word has been made flesh, and salvation is not for one nation but for all.

Definite and timely was the message as further announced: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Many and various were the Christs of the old dispensation. In educating his people through revelation, inspiration, captivity, suffering, and sorrow, there were needed in the course of the centuries many deliverers, many saviours, many Christs. A Christ is one anointed to do God's will. And so the people's Bible, the family Bible in use throughout the synagogues and homes of Israel, tells us on its page that Cyrus was God's Christ, to execute his commands in returning Israel from Babylon to their old home. Yet as above all his fellows Jesus the Christ was "anointed with the oil of gladness," and honored above all the angels, so here the anointing is distinct, separating Jesus, Son of Mary, as the Lord of life and glory above all the sons of men. He is Christ the Lord; that is, he is the anointed Saviour, anointed as prophet, priest, and King. He is Jehovah, Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man.

Now after so glorious a revelation to those simple shepherds some sign of direction was necessary; and so, with that accommodation to human needs and necessities so conspicuous throughout the Bible, we read further: "And this is the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." Yes; the sign and signal of God's message and good news to man is given in a newborn child, an infant, a baby. What helplessness and weakness each of these common words suggests! How unlike all human inventions!

How utterly different from the mythology and fairy tales which tell of the entrance into the world of those who have become emperors and mighty conquerors! Amid circumstances of poverty and discomfort this Son of God makes his appearance upon the earth. Lying in the food-trough, whence the cattle daily receive their meals, the helpless little one is the sign. This is the sign and token of the love of God to all the nations of the earth, to the whole family of mankind. This is the seal that he is the Father after whom every fatherhood on earth is named. This is the proof that the Christian family is holy. This is the certain sign that in this little child all the nations of the earth are to be blessed.

Hereby the Lord gives witness that the former things have passed away, that the promises given to Eve, to Noah, to Abraham, to David, to the returned exiles from Babylon, voiced in the golden tongue of the great prophet of the captivity and deliverance, are all fulfilled. Great as are the figures of patriarch, priest, king, and prophet, they are all now as shadows beside this living reality, whose thoughts, whose life, whose example, whose triumphs shall fill all the earth.

And so, with a burden of glory grander than all Italian art, Luke lifts our thoughts again to the resources and populace of heaven. The celestial windows are opened, yet not in flood and curse. The voice from the ground is not that of vengeance. Heaven and earth are united in celebration of the good news. The Angel of the Annunciation is not alone. There comes, as the original narrative says, a shining-forth, a detachment of the heavenly army. They praise God and sing, "Gloria in excelsis," while they proclaim and dispense among men of his good will. They preach the true gospel, not of Universalism, not of the restoration of all men into the fullness of the divine image, but "peace among men, in

whom he is well pleased." In their gladdest songs they tell us that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," while they also announce to every soul on earth, peace, happiness, the good will of God to all who will freely accept the blessing.

Instantly the hearts of the shepherds are moved. They do not stop to analyze their feelings, they do not at once adopt the attitude of the skeptic and the critic. Had they halted to enter into discussion and debate the actual vision, the sign might never have been theirs. But with glad alacrity, obeying the good impulse of the moment, they come to the city of David, and see with their own eyes how a saying has become a thing, how the word of the Lord is not only truth, but fact. God has given them a revelation; he has not inspired them to tell any new truth; he has revealed to them both a fact and a truth; and with glad hearts they go to look upon the embodied fact and to experience the truth of what had been announced to them.

How rich the picture as it comes through the most human of the Evangelists! What cheer to those who have to bear the heat and burdens of life in toil, in poverty, in cramped and narrow circumstances! How sweet and helpful the example of the Virgin Mother! Throughout all the ages her example has been inspiring, potent, ever helpful. The vast majority of mothers in this world are poor. They have not the thousandfold vision of comfort which wealth can procure. They bear the period of waiting and anxiety amid their daily toil; and with only God to know their needs and to help them, they carry first the cross and then wear the crown of motherhood. They enter into the valley of the shadow of death for the sake of those who are to come after them. Yet with a rich provision of kindly Providence and saving grace, not only is the Old Testament marvelously full in its wealth of

words of sympathy and tenderness for the mother, — words which are only understood by both father and mother in the crucial time of experience, — but here in the opening pages of the New Testament is the picture of a mother in poverty, yet blessed and glorified. Many-sided as is the application of the Bible to our earthly lives, rich as are the messages of comfort to our every burden of duty, surely to the mother the gospel is full of divine comfort.

Helpful and glorious is also the record that the angel's song was first heard by the shepherds. Alas, alas, for the morbid analyst, the chronic doubter, the man who has cultivated his intellect at the expense of his heart, who can never hear the angels sing, who cannot see the messengers of God, who does not know that in times of need the mountain side is white with many an angel tent! Did the prophet mean it for irony, or was he simply stating uncolored fact, when he narrates the story of Balaam, — Balaam, the man of genius, — "and the ass saw the angel"? If by being self-conceited or overlearned, or laboring under the supposition that we are men of genius and too lofty to look at what common people see, it may be well, it may humble our pride to know that God allows the ass to see that to which we are blind. To the shepherds he gives the hearing of the heavenly choir, while to the scribe and Pharisee is given only the empty questioning and foolish doubt.

Shall we not then all "hasten to Bethlehem with joyful accord," come at once to our Saviour, see the sign which God hath given, begin life with him, follow him along the pathway he hath marked, even though it lead us over and beyond the cross of Calvary? For while he lives we shall live also.

William Elliot Griffis.

PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

LUKE 2: 25–38.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon," etc.

CALLS to special notice are occasionally met with as we read the Scriptures. Here is one of them. The "beholds" and the "verilys" catch the eye, as they did the ear, and quicken attention. With the first greeting the angel had told the Virgin of her high honor; the heavenly host had prefaced their "good tidings" to the startled shepherds, and the Evangelist presents this scene of rare contrasts and suggestiveness. No wonder the imagination and genius of painters ever since have fixed on this passage as worthy their best gifts. It has most inspiring elements.

I. *The humiliation of Christ under the law.*

A crying babe is a very common sight in this world. Its woe is voiced in the first moments of mortal life. Months pass before it looks on that which induces smiles and laughter. Loving faces bending over it, strong arms bearing it up, cheery voices appealing to it are long in getting recognition. It is easily moved to tears. It cannot forget its exile and isolation though among devoted friends. Pain is its portion, and ignorance of its own wants its grief. So its wailings are expected, and borne with such patience as admiring parents can exercise. Into a sphere so limited and lowly, into a condition so helpless and forlorn, the Infinite consented to come.

This strange but precious Child the mother had offered to the cruel rite which classed him among Jehovah's own people. "The infant's cradle," says Farrar, "is tinged

with a crimson reflection from the Redeemer's cross." His baptismal name was dyed with his own blood; his piercing screams were prophetic of that "great cry" which was to be heard through the universe. So sin publishes its sorrowful fruits, while as yet it is not personal. The infant must share them. There stood in Jerusalem the magnificent temple where, so far as God had one abiding place on earth above another, he dwelt. There he displayed the glory of his presence. There the faithful came to offer sacrifices of praise and prayer. There he received the dedication of the firstborn, which he claimed for himself. This "Son of the Highest" must come, in the established order, for consecration and redemption from lifelong service in that house. It was indeed "the Lord of the temple entering the temple of the Lord." It was the most entire putting off of his authority to take instead the place of a servant.

All the offices which might be required of the least and lowest he was rightly, and by his own will, subject to. It were no degradation for the Almighty to conform to the eternal principles of righteousness. These are but the expression of himself. To stoop, however, to the details of a ceremonial by which a sinful soul is made acceptable to the sinless, that for the faultless to do — to stand and be treated and judged as if he needed to make atonement for his own sin — that is such "emptying of himself" as was never witnessed, before or since. We get but the faintest notion of such marvelous doing. We cannot stretch our thoughts to measure the length and breadth and depth and height of such condescension. It is the "mystery of godliness." If it staggers many a philosophic mind here, so it does the angelic. That the *Whole*, filling all space and informing all being, *can* be cramped into the insignificant tenantry of an infant's body and brain seems a greater absurdity than the desire

thus to abase himself. Nothing less than this the Christ claimed to have done, as prophet foresaw it and apostle testified to it. We are at least able to see how complete such identity would be with our human life and condition.

The facts of experience outweigh any theories. The fears, hopes, trials, joys of mortality can only be known by one who has shared them. Such an one must submit to all the demands which a righteous Lord makes of his creatures. When they bring the sacrifice of the penitent he must have part in that; when they yield outward allegiance, such proffer he too must make; when they pray for pardon and blessing, so must he. And yet in one respect the simile fails, for, while poignant grief or bitter remorse sways the conscious sinner, the Christ could never have such self-accusation. His union with the guilty race was so perfect that his pity and regret for its shame and sorrow were boundless. That special and perfect offering, undistinguished by the priest, but seen by the Omniscient, was ever being presented when he came into the sanctuary. The weak and unobservant infant was but bringing it, growing more and more in volume as he — after the manner of men — "grew in wisdom and stature." From that first weakling sound to the touching lament over the haughty city, from that faint sigh in the muffled robe to the agony and bloody sweat which cast him to the ground, was one continuous outpouring of a spirit linked with and crushed under the load of sin, yet a spirit immaculate, whose appeal was irresistible. If "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," it is also true that now there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." His first visit to the temple under the law made it possible finally to supersede that temple by a more significant obedience to the law under the great arch of the heavens, in the sight of

all the world. So all righteousness was fulfilled, as he came for that holy purpose.

II. *The recognition of Christ as the Messiah.*

Groups from all provinces and of varied characters were continually coming into the Lord's house. The elaborate system of requirements, in sacrifice and payment of vows, kept numerous attendants busy, as a nation was, through their medium, drawing near unto God. The Mother, who had gone down to the very gates of death for this her darling Child, brought with him the appointed offering for her deliverance. It was the accepted gift of the poor. The stable yard of the advent and the two young pigeons of the purification were in keeping with each other. Poverty is unnatural in a world so full of good. But poverty is a very common lot, and Jesus must know its pinchings. The priest hurriedly received the trifling sum and, entering the familiar name of the exempt Child on the roll of the nation, struck off the heads of the birds and made haste, through the smoke of the burning sacrifice, to pronounce the offerer cleansed from her impurity. He cast but a hasty glance at the fair face which has been idealized and adored in all the ages since. He saw nothing there of special distinction, as a "handmaid of the Lord." Least of all did he perceive or dream that for the moment he held in his arms "the Lord's anointed." There was no supernal light which streamed from that slight form. There was no unusual thrill he felt at the touch of those baby fingers; there was no compelling charm in that tiny countenance. He gave it back to its parents as a trader when his errand is done, to serve the next who waits.

And she, in whose heart the tidings of the shepherds were stirring profound hopes, did she not turn, half disappointed that here, where the Holiest dwelt, there was no worthy greeting of the infant King? Yet he was

naught there but a peasant's child. Portents were nothing if they lacked the sanction of Jehovah: he had made no sign. But as the little party turned, an aged saint was tottering through the temple courts. He was full of faith that Israel's bright day was drawing near though his earthly one was waning. To him, mourning secretly over the degeneracy of the times, praying earnestly for the Deliverer, studying with open mind and heart the precious promises of the Scripture, had been given the full assurance that before his eyes closed to all earthly scenes they should rest upon the Lord Christ. That and nothing more. 'T was not said he should behold a figure of commanding presence wearing the royal purple, or a mitered priest wielding the staff of universal dominion, or a youth of striking bearing and gracious address, or a babe regal in its surroundings and heralded as he for whom the whole world has waited. So this dear old man went about any day, any hour, anywhere, expecting the beatific vision. There, behold it was! He begged the unspeakable privilege of taking in his trembling arms the priceless life. He had not believed in vain. He had at last assurance that earth and heaven were in communication. The Messiah was not a mere daydream which in its noble subject and glorious proportions had kept his people from sinking into atheism. Divinely enkindled in every Hebrew breast, this hope had been their salvation hitherto. Death was welcome to him now since he had seen the promised Saviour. From the trembling, inspired lips burst forth that lofty song which many since, looking on the same Christ, have repeated as they passed out of life. A sure salvation satisfies any soul. The venerable prophetess too, whose widowhood had been made beautiful through pious waiting on the service of the sanctuary, was among those who looked ever for the Consolation of Israel. She was gifted with keen

eye to detect the holiest things. Her wavering voice was suddenly tuned to perfect harmony as it joined the celestial choirs in their anthem, which still was echoing over the heights of Bethlehem. These two worthies had, as one fitly suggests, "blossomed at the close of a long life into this noble ecstasy of joy." It was simply such reward as comes to the pure in heart and the single-minded.

They who dwell on mountain tops see far beyond the horizon which shuts in the valleys; they breathe a clearer air and it is translucent. It is for them first to catch the coming dawn. Still there are spiritual heights where the senses are marvelously quickened, and where the true seers of any era must abide. These make out, before the rest, the fair presence of the Sun of Righteousness.

The lower and material things of time dull a spirit else given at the first to perceive and greet its Lord. All great and glorious ideals flash before those who pray for and live to welcome them. The high priest may be the very last to discern the World Master when he comes to his own. Professional service may obscure where simplicity clarifies: the children shout "Hosanna!" while the scribes mutter curses. The Messiah looks for individual recognition still.

III. *The future conflict of Christ, and his victory.*

It was a long glance down the ages which was granted those aged saints. In its brevity and fullness it was like that the tempter, thirty years after, set before the Christ. Two features were marked in it — struggle and triumph. Mastery never comes without effort, in any universe of which we know. The conflict which in some forms of religion is represented as an eternal one — the ancient and active opposition between good and evil — between Ormuzd and Ahriman — that, under whatever name, continues. The volcano bides its time to burst forth, the

frosts to cut down the flowers, the pestilence to rage, the bugle to call to slaughter, the vile to spoil the pure, the death reaper to gather his harvest. What of security and beauty and health and peace and sweetness and life we have is always maintaining itself against attack, more or less open. No matchless and worthy character can have undisputed leave in this world. Evil does not retire at the mere exhibition of virtue. We should almost think it would, when seeing what advantage righteousness is, in every way. Wickedness, though, seems to many the more desirable and makes vigorous stand for itself. An observing mind would have foreseen the certain contest in which the faultless One must be involved. Such, though, could hardly have understood its range and its bitterness, or clearly seen its final issue. A babe's future is never imagined at its worst or its best. Time often brings revelations we could not possibly have believed had they been previously given.

In outline indeed, but vividly, did these rare spirits discern the contending hosts about the person of the Christ and his universal dominion. From that first crying out against the carpenter's Son at Nazareth, through three years of opposition and plottings, to the Mother's agony at the nation's sentence, and then to the nailing to the cross, and from that supreme tragedy through all the centuries which are to be — the assaults which he suffers in the person of his followers, the mockings, the denials, the subtle or desperate attacks made upon his Church — this all stood out in marvelous distinctness before the simple-hearted Simeon. To supplement such a sad unveiling, to the venerable Anna was granted to behold, just as plainly, the indescribable glory of the Messiah's kingdom, of which the most pure-minded and godly had dreamed as it shone beyond all the weary years which must precede. The psalmist's glowing picture, Isaiah's

and Ezekiel's strange sketchings of what should be — this was given her to see, as from the heights of Nebo the fair land of Canaan, toward which he had so long journeyed, lay before the great lawgiver of Israel. And they who were chancing that day to come and go in those sacred courts were caught and held by the rapt sentences of the priestess so full of sublime joy and assurance and beauty. It was more than a nation's best heart unburdening itself. It was humanity's highest, holiest aspiration, not spending itself in prayer, but exulting over its realization. It was the golden age of heathen poetry, no longer a myth, but God's revelation of his love for his children and their perception of it and love for him.

Such final issue must be, if the principles which underlie our faith are true. Christ is the incarnation of love and righteousness and power. He never ceases working, and that to a gracious, beneficent end. We are constantly told that "the triumphing of the wicked is short." These dreadful stretches of time through which iniquity riots may seem to be endless, but from the heavenly towers and with celestial measurements they may appear but brief and transient. Across this stage of confused and hopeless struggles between holiness and sin there falls the light from that perfect realm which we must never lose. It is radiant with the promise of "One God, one law, one element, and one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

De Witt S. Clark.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

MATTHEW 2: 1–12.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa," etc.

THE visit of the Magi, or wise men of the East, to the manger at Bethlehem is justly regarded as symbolical of the tribute which the whole Gentile world was eventually to pay to the anointed King of the Jews. These wise men belonged to the priestly class in Chaldea whose business it was to interpret the signs and portents of the heavenly bodies. It was over this class of "wise men" that Daniel was made ruler by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2: 48). As a class the Magi were devoted to a very unsatisfactory method of obtaining knowledge, and they were doubtless led to practice extensively upon the credulity of the people, and in many cases to become the victims of their own magical arts. But, as Balaam was directed by the Spirit of the Lord to pay tribute to the Star that was to arise out of Jacob, so it is in analogy with the methods of divine Providence that these "wise men" of the East at the beginning of the Christian era, should be led to discern from the signs of the times results which were unattainable by their ordinary methods of procedure. Through some remarkable astronomical manifestations of the time they were led to a correct interpretation of the momentous spiritual facts that were coming to pass in the development of Jewish history, and to connect "the star in the East" with "the star of Bethlehem."

In passing it is well to pause and reflect upon the meaning of this revelation of God to the Gentile world. Many are inclined to take too narrow a view of the course

of God's revelation of himself to the human race. The Jews were indeed God's peculiar people, but Christ was not the exclusive property of the Jewish race. Though his mother was a Jewess, he was not begotten by a Jewish father, but by virtue of his miraculous conception he became a citizen of the whole world, in whom every kingdom and tribe and nation were to have direct interest. At no time has God been unmindful of the Gentile world. But, as Paul reasoned in his sermon at Lycaonia (Acts 14:17) and in his discourse on Mars Hill (Acts 17:27, 28), he is not far from every one of us, and hath not left himself without witness, in that he gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Melchizedek and Job are shining examples of those who are obedient to the divine commandment, though outside of the Jewish fold. The manifestation of God to Cornelius forced upon Peter's unwilling mind the fact that God is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. We are not, therefore, shut up to the idea that there is no revelation of God to sincere heathen. We do not magnify the glory of the Christian revelation by depreciating that which is made to all mankind. We need not deny that the starlight of the heathen is true light from heaven. It is sufficient for us to maintain that the light of the gospel shines with an effulgence like that of the sun. The light of the sun is simply that of a star nearer to us than the others; so Christ is God drawn nigh to us, even God manifest in the flesh.

There has been much curiosity to know what was the astronomical phenomenon which drew the "wise men" of the East to Bethlehem. The question concerning this is twofold: first, What was the actual astronomical phenomenon? second, How should that have been connected with the birth of a king to the Jews?

Accustomed as the Magi were to scan the heavens closely for signs and portents, almost any unusual appearance would attract their attention. But in this case there seemed to be more permanence in the phenomenon than would pertain to a meteor. Of other appearances most likely to attract their attention, those known frequently to occur are comets, conjunctions of planets, and variable stars, which for some unknown cause at times flash out with unaccustomed brilliancy and then fade away to indistinctness. Of these phenomena the conjunction of planets has seemed to commentators and devout astronomers the most probable one.

Three remarkable conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter are known to have occurred near the time of the Saviour's birth; namely, during the 747th year of Rome, which corresponds to 6 B.C. Every one now admits that our era starts from the wrong point, and that the date of Christ's birth was at least four years earlier than the date ordinarily assigned. This is made certain by the fact that Christ's birth took place before the death of Herod the Great, which we know was early in the 750th year of Rome. The occurrence of these conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter so near the time assigned to the birth of Christ naturally suggests their relation to the events narrated in our lesson, since some time must have elapsed between the first appearance of the star in the East and the communication of the wise men with Herod. It is a long journey from Babylonia to Palestine, and may well have occupied a whole season.

According to astronomical calculations the first conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, in the year 747 of Rome, occurred in the later part of May, while in October and December of the same year two other conjunctions occurred. It is certainly reasonable to suppose, so Kepler argued, that such a series of conjunctions of two of the

largest planets was well calculated to excite ardent inquiry in the minds of the Chaldean Magi.

The question naturally arising is: Why should their thoughts have been turned by such a portent to inquire concerning the birth of a king of the Jews? One answer to this question is that at the time a general expectation pervaded the East that a king was to arise in Judæa to rule the world. To this general expectation profane historians bear ample testimony. A natural origin for such expectation is found in the Jewish Scriptures themselves. Balaam (Num. 24: 17) had early prophesied that a star was to arise out of Jacob, evidently referring to a future king of renown; while Daniel and other prophets of the exile had made the East familiar with the bright expectations of their people. Others point to the fact that these conjunctions of the planets all occurred in the constellation *Pisces*, which was believed by many in the East to indicate events connected with Jewish history. At a later date it certainly was the case that this constellation denoted Judæa. Whether it did so at the time of Christ is, however, conjectural.

But after allowing all proper weight to these considerations, it would seem at any rate allowable, if not necessary, to suppose that there was a divine direction of these candid and inquiring minds to the great event which was about to happen. Doubtless they beheld the truth with great indistinctness and dimness of vision, and, like the blind man whose eyes the Saviour opened, could only see men like trees walking. Still the vision accomplished its purpose if it led them to the source of all knowledge and to the discovery of Him who lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Here also we must pause to consider the great truth enforced upon us by the obedience of these world-renowned seekers after truth. That the light they followed

was dim is shown by their actions upon reaching Jerusalem. They had come to the capital of the Jewish nation without knowing the exact place in which they might look for the object of their adoration. They had not waited for perfect knowledge before setting out upon their journey. It had been enough for them that the indications dimly pointed toward Jerusalem. They walked by faith and not by sight. Where they did not have the full light of day they cheerfully followed the indistinct light vouchsafed them. They followed on to know the Lord, confident that further light would be obtained as they pressed forward "toward the mark of the prize of their high calling." They believed that if they made the best use of the light they had and did the present will of the Lord, they should eventually have more light and fully know the things for which they longed. In many respects their journey was like Abraham's when he left that same region in obedience to the divine command, seeking for a city yet to come whose foundations were imperishable. Thus they are examples to us as we move forward from day to day amid doubts and difficulties and along a partially illuminated path of duty. With us, as with them, it should be sufficient that our faces are toward the light, that we are doing with our might the duties of the present hour, and that, according to the divine promise, new light will burst upon us as occasion shall require.

Upon reaching Jerusalem this new light came in due time. It is to be noted that they were left to make use of all the natural means for acquiring the knowledge they sought. They consulted Herod, and through him the interpreters of the Old Testament prophecies, and found that the king of the Jews was to be born in Bethlehem. But to confirm their faith and to add greater definiteness to it, it would seem that there was a fresh divine interposition and that there was another astro-

nomical phenomenon which gave them the specific information they desired. That the star which now guided them to the specific place of the Saviour's birth was not the same as that which first started them upon their journey would appear from the fact that they had not depended upon such a star to direct them after they reached Jerusalem. It would seem more likely that now, after starting from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in accordance with Herod's advice, some other glowing object in the sky hung over or descended toward the specific place where Mary and her newborn babe were to be found. This may have been some one of those many new stars that from time to time appear in the heavens and shine out with unwonted brilliancy for a season and then disappear. Had such a star been hanging over the horizon and sinking behind the spot where Mary had sought refuge in the lowly manger, it might well have answered the description which is given in our lesson of the star that went before them after they left Jerusalem. Or it is possible that a shining meteor, seeming to fall near the place, might answer the description and serve the purpose which is attributed to the appearance of a star. At any rate it is not difficult to believe that in this case, as in the majority of cases, there was a providential and divine conjunction of events in which the facts of the material creation were made to reveal to inquiring minds the higher truths of the spiritual world. This same star was doubtless visible to the multitudes in Judæa at that time, but only to the devout and inquiring minds of these wise men did it point to the manger of Bethlehem and lead to the Saviour of the world.

In more respects than one the conduct of these wise men of the East is worthy of our imitation. Not only were they obedient to the divine call to go forth in search of their heavenly King, but when they had found him

they worshiped him and laid upon his altar the best gifts in their possession. The character of the gifts is such as to warrant us in the presentation of many classes of offerings which are little appreciated at the present day. These gifts were gifts of respect designed to honor the object of their worship, and were not dependent for their efficiency upon the accomplishment of any of the low forms of utility which constitute so great a part of modern life. Like the precious alabaster box of ointment which was broken upon the Saviour's head just previous to his passion and which he commended as being a fit burial offering in commemoration of his approaching death, so these gifts of the wise men accomplished their service in bestowing honor upon the royal personage at whose feet they were laid. They were gifts befitting the person of a king; they might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and given to the poor, but they would not thus have accomplished the full purpose of the worshiping heart. It is fitting to make sacrifices which have in view no gratification of the more common elements of our nature. The beauty of the Lord's house is a fitting object for us to secure by the pouring out of our treasure. In a thousand ways we are called upon to pay tribute to the higher elements of our nature, and to be made aware of the fact that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Indeed, the larger part of the value of life consists in the sentiments which we cherish with reference to sacred things. The flow of thought and feeling connected with the worship of God and with the contemplation of heavenly objects affords to man the highest satisfaction of which his nature is capable. When David was moved to offer a sacrifice upon the threshing floor of Araunah he justly resented the proposition that he should receive the

oxen as a gift from the generous owner. He would not offer to the Lord an offering that cost him nothing. To be acceptable to his own mind the offering must represent a real sacrifice of his own. Thus it is not paying proper tribute to our religious nature when we refuse to make sacrifices for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The true worshiper of God counts it his highest joy when he has anything which he can lay at the Saviour's feet. A long journey had these wise men taken to bring their gold and frankincense and myrrh to beautify the Saviour's lowly surroundings and to sweeten the atmosphere of the manger in which he was compelled to lie. It was not the gifts in themselves which were of chief value; it was the spectacle of supreme devotion to God and of total forgetfulness of self which was of priceless value to the world, arousing to distant ages the noblest sentiments of the human soul, and stimulating all mankind to similar deeds of loyalty and love.

G. Frederick Wright.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

MATTHEW 2: 13–23.

"Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee."

IT is noticeable that the successive steps leading to the flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth were taken as the results of dreams. It was in a dream the warning was given the Magi to escape the violence of Herod. It was in a dream the angel appeared to Joseph warning him to take the young child to Egypt. After Herod's death, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to return into the land of Israel. Upon reaching Judæa, he was again warned in a dream to turn aside into Galilee, because Archelaus, of like nature with his father Herod, was on Herod's throne.

The reference to dreams does not place the records in the class of myths. Science recognizes in the peculiar conditions what it cannot explain. A famous sonata of Tartini was given in a dream, and copied immediately upon awaking from the sleep. The poem of Coleridge, Kubla Khan, was wholly the product of a dream, copied from memory before he could be disturbed. In a dream the great Condorcet finished some of his most abstruse problems that have given him fame. The "stuff that dreams are made of" is not altogether illusion. Upon modern analysis, the perceptive faculties of Joseph were awake while the reflective were without sensibility at the time.

The dreams were not on a surprising theme; Joseph

knew the tyranny that counted murder a pastime for its own supremacy. His dream was a vivid impression of a tyrant who could slaughter the little children of Bethlehem — an old man who feared that royalty was threatened by the humble homes of Bethlehem. Reason assented to the warning of the dream; and the child of the manger before whom the Magi had bowed in reverence was spared. Angels were on guard, and the voice of God was heard.

We observe a few lessons from this sacred story, bearing upon the flight into Egypt: —

I. *The occasion for the flight.* It was to save life from a human tyrant. Tyranny rests back upon a depraved moral nature. Tyranny is the method of inflicting a base motive upon the innocent. The one doctrine that cannot be argued down is depravity. Some people try to explain away the biblical references to hell; but were the Bible silent, hell could be pictured from human history. Handle the instruments invented for human torture and answer how much above fiends could they have been who invented them. The rougher the spikes upon the rack, the more devilish must have been the inventor.

Cruelty is sometimes rough and sometimes refined; but cruelty remains in both instances alike. Herod massacred with knives; moderns often invent other ways. Rulers were murderers when the angels sang their heavenly song over Bethlehem. Goodness had no shield and suspected greatness was doomed. The innocence of childhood was no protection. The quality of goodness was matched by a corresponding quality of infamy seeking to destroy it. Herod, who should have been a protector of the innocent against evildoers, was an evildoer himself. The Child over whom angels sang was in danger. Robbers congregate where the treasure is. Villains keep their places, where

virtue threatens, by the destruction of those whom they hate. Pharisees crucified the Christ out of envy. Not yet has human nature changed. There is an old proverb: "The pen is mightier than the sword." Mightier for what? That which is mightier for good in good hands is mightier for evil in evil hands. Herod used the sword to kill; moderns use the pen to destroy. Even in this Christian age, candidates for public honors must undergo detraction, lest they shall succeed. The Herods change their methods, not their real nature.

The possibilities of the human heart are pictured in the occasion for the flight of Joseph and Mary into Egypt with the Holy Child. In dreams and in daylight the vigilance of Joseph never ceased. The sword was piercing Mary's heart already, as Simeon had prophesied. Upon their long weary journey they kept jealous care of the little child upon whose name the centuries were to change color. The child was safe, while the frantic mothers of Bethlehem were prostrate with grief. Did the fond mother wonder why her Child could not have a better birthplace than among the cattle? Did she speak of hardship when bearing the long and weary journey to a land she had never seen? Did her tears fall softly upon the baby form whose worth she did not know, while she knew that Herod was seeking such an innocent life? The plaintive side of the journey is not told. The venom of hatred gives the picture in distinct lines.

Long before, prophetic vision had declared what would come. The prophecy of divine certainty was being fulfilled. A vision, larger than man could take in, was sure of the event that was coming. Six hundred years ago the prophet had pictured the sorrows of Rama in the carrying out of the terrible command of slaughter and death: "Lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted,

because they are not;" but through it all the Child was safe. Herod was defeated.

II. *The place of the flight.* It is remarkable that Egypt was the one place of safety among the nations. It furnished what Greece did not have, freedom from tyranny. The boasted culture and power of Rome were on the side of the strong and the cruel. The spirit that would later build its Colosseum was in Cæsar's domain. Across the Mediterranean was the harbor to the oppressed, and thither God sent the parents with the Holy Child. Another prophecy was to be fulfilled: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Ancient Greek civilization had its origin in Egypt. It was the mother of nations. Its power was symbolized in its pyramids. Its mysteries were typified in the Sphinx of its desert, immovable through time. Its magnificence was petrified in the colossal architecture of Karnak. Its tombs revealed their hope of a life beyond this existence — the mummied forms waiting for the return of a life towards which they looked.

Its obelisks, upon which Moses had looked, still stood. A fancied possibility had named the pyramids "Joseph's Barns." Beside its river Israel had flourished, only to pine away into a degraded servitude. The land was a garden; but death was in its borders. The nation was greatness in decay. Its Pharaohs have left names of power. The contact with history has made its position more brilliant; but the larger honor was given when the flight of the holy family brought Christ into the nation for a home. In its university Moses was schooled, and as a youth had its palaces for a home. A fascination lingers in the dynasty over which the statesman Joseph bore so prominent a part. "Israel in Egypt" has become the theme of sermon and song. It was the seat of philosophy and mysticism. Greece has not obscured the great brilliancy of the once proud nation of Africa.

It was heaven's decree that God's Son should enter Egypt.

The Christian student recognizes the part Egypt has taken in Christianizing the world. The famous Alexandrian school was the oldest of the noted centers for Christian education. Some of the early Church fathers held that it was founded by Mark the Evangelist. The same school that had translated the Old Testament into the version known as the Septuagint gave the early Church such followers of Christ as Clement, Athanasius, Origen, and Cyril. Disciples of the Christian faith owe a reverent honor to the history of the once great people among whom God sent his Son. False religions have corroded its fair fame. Corrupt remainders of paganism became hindrances to the pure faith preached by the apostles. Hierarchical ambitions here became especially prominent, selfish interests foisted upon the name of Christ; but to Egypt, home for two years of the Son of Mary, we owe great respect.

III. *The return from the flight.* The return was commanded by the angel in the dream. It was to be a return to a people whose narrowness and bigotry would give their Redeemer no rest. He was going to degenerate sons of Israel who would despise and reject him. It was not a return to repose and delightful assistance. He was to return to the people whose church and government would end his youthful life with a false judicial sentence, decreeing his death in the agonies of the crucifixion.

Concerning the method of the divine revelation in dreams we have already spoken. The chief point to notice is the divine interest in the young life. All through the life of Christ we are reminded of his Father's care. It is the way of Providence. No special care need be assumed simply because of the divine nature of the Son. Warning directions were frequent. We are con-

stantly told how Christ was led by the Spirit in doing his Father's will. The reason given Joseph in the dream was concise: "They are dead which sought the young child's life."

There is comfort in the suggestion that what was true in the divine care over Christ is true of all God's creatures. We recognize the power of parental influence directly given; we claim their right in guiding those committed to their charge; we choose teachers whose burden shall be to lead the child on step by step. We seek a knowledge of the better way; we guard against temptations set for those who are innocently walking they know not whither; parental intuitions recognize the necessity for such oversight; but shall it be said that God is ruled out from such supervision? Is there no such thing as divine providence? Shall it be presumed that God has refused all obligation to a care that our instincts demand as essential for success? Scriptural teachings underlying the doctrine of prayer assent to the relations we bear to One who will direct our steps. He in whom we live and move and have our being is never absent from a willingness to lead us into the ways of righteousness.

The return into the land of Israel was in the line of duty. The divine purpose in the Child's life was there to be fulfilled. The Son of God never sought to please himself, outside of duty. He was to live for others, not for himself. The immediate danger that men would take his life was passed; and his purpose was fixed to do his Father's will. In this reason for the return from Egypt we notice what God expects of each of us. The grandest motive in life is *duty*. Not what we wish, but what we *ought* is the chief obligation laid upon ourselves. Every career is to be weighed by what it has done for others. No man liveth unto himself, especially under the Christian leadership. Safety from danger, as shown in

the flight into Egypt, was only a preparation for a self-sacrifice that would end in the words of infinite meaning: "It is finished."

IV. *From Egypt to Nazareth.* The commanded return was directly into danger, except as wisdom were used. The divine command had returned him into Israel, only to direct him again to another and hidden place. Of so little importance was Nazareth that it was unknown to history until the infant Jesus was taken thither. People would as soon have expected royalty to flourish in a pesthouse as that a prophet should come out of Nazareth. The temper of its inhabitants is evident in their purpose to murder him after the performance of so many mighty works elsewhere, but which he could not there repeat because of their unbelief. It was the popular belief that nothing good could ever come from such a place. The life of John the Baptist was no more isolated in the desert than was Christ in that despised town. Prejudice hedged him in away from any fear of royalty. As though to add contempt to the cross his accusers affixed the hated name to his own, Jesus of Nazareth.

One of the strongest lessons of history needs often repetition: that the place does not make the man. Environment is not an indelible index of the characters of those who are kept within its limits. The great national leader Henry Clay may have seemed strangely out of place in the "Slashes" of Virginia, but they were his early home. The great Elijah was an Arab. Seven cities claim Homer, but neither made him. Character is independent of place. Nazareth was the most fitting place for the home of Jesus. It denoted in its lowliness of reputation the humility that always characterizes the religion of Christ. It revealed the certainty that spiritual power is not the outcome of outward surroundings. The path of God is often downward, that out of the descent the

upward path may be taken. Joseph's brilliant career began in the dungeon. Moses' history can never be recalled except as it pictures the cradle of rushes rocked upon the waters of the Nile. The rise of the shepherd boy to the throne was a surprise to his family and to himself as well. Severest teachers in their discipline accomplish most, sometimes, for their pupils.

Out from the debasement of Nazareth, Christ came in a character that feared no taint. The speech of the town was vulgar and unrefined, yet "he spake as never man spake." Out from that abode of the lowly he went forth on his mission of love. Nazareth kept him from the royal enmity of the Cæsars. It was his hidden home.

Above the names of patriarchs, judges, and prophets, whose contact with that region made it famous, the name of Jesus stands alone. Its power in the education of the child and youth we cannot analyze. He was an exotic among its people. He had within him what the world could not fashion or hinder; he was "a root out of a dry ground." Nazareth neither helped nor hindered his growth; he became what he was in himself. Just as the world cannot make one other than he is in himself, so the divine greatness of Christ's nature declared itself in spite of the contempt inherent in the fulfillment of the prophecy: "He shall be called a Nazarene." It has not been the beautiful setting of the place that has given him his glory; but rather but for his name Nazareth would still be unknown.

David O. Mears.

THE YOUTH OF JESUS.

LUKE 2: 40–52.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom."

THE journey to Jerusalem and the sojourn there were the sole occasion which has furnished us a picture of the youth of Jesus. It afforded, however, opportunity for an instantaneous photograph which makes as pleasing an impression as any portrait could give though painted by an artist from many deliberate sittings. We see the unfolding of the divine life and the blooming of the millennial plant of the ages. We are able to discover what had been latent in the youthful mind and character. It is no longer a question: "What shall this child be?" Parents watch with anxiety the opening life of a little one to detect the likeness to themselves and the good or bad traits which may be carried on by descent. Tiberius said as he stood with his empress looking at their offspring: "What could be born of us but a monster?" A father who had a strong desire to preach the gospel finally gave up this chosen plan through excessive embarrassment, promising to dedicate his firstborn son to that ministry. The boy, ignorant of this special consecration, went through many adverse experiences, but finally told his sire of his purpose to enter that profession. Then the parent confessed that this was the fulfillment of his own long-cherished secret hope. Any indications of mental, musical, artistic, scientific, or military gifts of the ancestors are eagerly noted, as well as those which show striking qualities of heart and character. Jesus' presence in the temple gave proof of the direction in which his mind had been previ-

ously bent. He would not have lingered there unless he had come across some congenial currents of thought which met the wants of his own soul. We have suggestions, therefore, of the moral and religious development which had been taking place and we notice along this line: —

I. *Jesus used his first liberty in the direction of spiritual tastes.* "And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast." The boy Jesus joined the pilgrimage to the city of his fathers, fulfilling with others a customary and privileged duty, but on the return journey lingered behind. There are times when children take life momentarily into their own hands without thought of disobedience. The eye of the country lad as he passes along through the bazaars of the capital catches at something which he has read about. He tarries and asks the price, unconscious that others have gone on without him. The young are often moved to some step which they have not considered previously by spiritual impulses. A lad goes to a prayer-meeting with his comrade without wanting to say beforehand just why or what he intends to do, or he makes up his mind to sign a temperance pledge without consultation or encouragement at home.

Jerusalem was at this time a great and splendid city. There were many sights of interest. The tidings of the games, the gladiators, and the Roman legions quartered there had doubtless reached Nazareth. When our village boys come up to the metropolis they have in mind objects which they wish to see and places they want to visit. These youthful strangers like to go off alone in the busy centers. One such young person recently came in at night to the home where he was staying and said of an exhibition to his cousin: "It was not *so* bad." He had read of the performance in his distant hamlet and turned his steps to

witness it at the first opportunity. When Jesus came to the capital of his country it was not the reviews of the military, the museums, the palaces of the rulers, or the circus which he anticipated seeing, but the temple. He had come up with cousins and comrades who doubtless went the rounds of the lawful sights, but Mary's Son did not join them in their excursions, though he seems to have had the permission of his parents for a time to do so.

The sojourn in the sacred city was not solely for a religious festival, but it was also a holiday occasion. It was a social event as well as a sacrificial one. But the hours of the spiritual celebration were not long enough for one lad's devotions. Jesus had planned no coarse pleasures and he could spend his whole vacation without rioting or regretful indulgences. There was no reaction from the license of the liberty which he enjoyed under the temple terrace hearing and questioning the doctors of the law. If he had saved money for work or errands done in his native village, he did not squander it in idle shows about town.

It is a serious anxiety which is felt concerning many of the young as to what they will do when the restraints of home are removed. Here was one left to himself away from the watchful eye of his parents, amid strange scenes, who kept his feet in the heavenly highway. He did in Jerusalem what he would have done in Nazareth. Perhaps he found the Lord's house a refuge from novel temptations as many another youth might do as he comes from the countryside to a great city.

The age at which Jesus took his place in the temple is one which has been critical for a vast number of the human race. It marks one of the great continental divides on the plateau of life. It has been like the chalk line for many in the eternal race. Others have at this period indicated strong bents toward the various business

callings and professional careers. At twelve Mrs. Stowe composed an essay with this title: "Can Immortality be proved from the Light of Nature?" Jonathan Edwards at a like age wrote a letter in a bantering style against the materiality of the soul. Ruskin at this stage had been six times through the Bible with his mother and when a year later Rogers' Italy was put into his hands he decided his life work.

II. *Jesus' first steps in liberty were about his Father's business.* "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The parents of the lad looked a long time before they found him. Probably they hunted in a great many places ere they thought of going to the temple. No matter how anxious people are for their children or how closely they keep watch over them the spiritual development is often at a more advanced stage than was anticipated. When Phillips Brooks had his interview with Helen Keller to tell her about her heavenly Father, she replied to his first approach to the subject: "I always knew there was a God, but I did not know what his name was." Mary and Joseph knew that their Son was an exemplary youth, but there is no record that they had observed extraordinary manifestations of wisdom and power. Human nature is so constituted that it does not quickly recognize moral traits as wonderful. Our minds are rather focused to catch the scintillations of intellectual genius. Jesus had always been at home and his growth may have been so gradual that it was not noticed save by a comparison of years. The village boy of Nazareth had one advantage which should not be overlooked as we consider the lonely life of his later days. He was brought up with other children — brothers and sisters or near relatives. This would make against his being a recluse or a petted child, and would lessen the likelihood of his parents' cultivating extravagant ideas of their firstborn. The discipline

of the town, the shop, as well as of the scenes of family joy and sorrow, had a part in the formation of a well-rounded character.

Many young persons have definitely chosen their life work at the age in which Jesus entered upon his. Edison the electrician came bounding into the room on this birthday and is reported to have said: "Mother, I am a bushel of wheat; I weigh eighty pounds." Next day he left home as a train boy on the railroad to begin his wonderful career. At a similar age Dr. Muhlenberg, on his graduation from his first school, wrote a dissertation on "The Choice of a Profession," and favored the ministry. About this time also he remained to a communion service, and though not yet a member of the church he wished that the Lord's Day would never end. Great questions will stir in the heart of a child in tender years, and Scripture mysteries are a more fruitful feeding ground than the fables of folly or even the wonders of cosmos or chaos. The religious craving thus early manifested does not show a morbid appetite any more than do the signs of genius. It often seems as though the young were providentially held back from too strong impulses toward a chosen career in order that they may seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Christian lads often develop adaptation for professions late and sometimes changes are necessary from one branch of trade to another, which perplex friends. This experience, however, results in a gain to character, if not always to scholarship or a bank account. A child is not a prodigy who has a marked Christian personality at this age. We can begin to anticipate the flowering of rich-grounded and gospel-trained life at twelve. There are very few trees but will furnish their sap, gum, or fruit after ten years of growth.

III. *Jesus indicated the line of his future mastery by his conduct at Jerusalem.* "After three days they found

him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." Though we cannot outline it in distinctive features, there was a crisis in the life of Jesus which he passed through in Jerusalem. The consciousness of a divine call was in him. Even the words of parents were not to supersede this authority. He recognized, perhaps, at this period the different natures which he held and the full mandate of the one which was supreme. There was not conversion in its usual sense, but there were many of the elements which are present in this change. The yielding of entire obedience to the voice of God which was now more clearly distinguished was not a different act in principle from what every child renders when he comes into the kingdom. Barring past sinfulness, there was the same trust which a youth in our day would show as he makes choice of Christ against the world. With Jesus the home training and the Spirit's guidance led to the temple, and the temple to the scepter of the skies. Where the church-loving habit had been formed there was one day raised the seat of authority. Segur, who built and presided over the cathedral of Saint Denis, in France, came to the monastery a poor orphan scholar. Ericsson used to have to stand on a box to look at the theodolite when as a lad of twelve he was assistant engineer on the Gotha Canal. The inventor of the iron-clad monitor was a master mechanic before he was out of his teens. Jesus once preached in Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Though the people stoned him out of the village they recognized that their former comrade and citizen had got something out of the musty synagogue and monotonous hamlet life which made him a master in Israel.

The example of the young Nazarene in Jerusalem, as well as his later training and teaching, showed that he regarded a man as greater than his profession or business.

Former associates wondered at the gracious words of the carpenter's Son; but his boyhood had expanded beyond the lines of the square and compass. He knew at least three languages. Though he was subject to his parents till late manhood, the bounds of his heart life were not circumscribed by the rules of a routine trade. No doubt after the memorable visit to Jerusalem he had many exacting duties and hardships, but there was no backward step from the prophetic mastery in the temple. Jesus did not in later years refer to any of his early experiences or limitation of opportunities to explain defects of character. He never said, "When I was a boy I suffered the loss of many advantages." He gathered out of a humble acreage the finest fruits of a gracious personality. While he carved the cupboard for the housewife, the cedar chest for the bride, a shepherd's crook, or children's toys, he was following a career broader than that of his handiwork. The hours which, like some young Angelo, he might have spent studying the architecture of the temple he used to secure that mastery which made him able to say of himself: "One greater than the temple is here." The days of tarrying in Jerusalem were those when his real spiritual ancestry was revealed. Some question started by the doctors of the law about Messiah may have led up to Jesus' final conviction as to his divine lineage and mission. He whom we mark as a lad in the house of God we find the high priest in the temple above. No anxious parent questions where the loved son now lost from sight abides forever. The early consecration of the child holds through the strange journey of life and the gates of death.

William R. Campbell.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

MARK 1: 1–11.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Verse 1. The highest truths and experiences are not best appreciated if met abruptly. Noonday's blaze is heralded by the gradual dawn. When Jesus was to open his incarnate ministry, a spiritual sunburst was impending. The glad tidings for which the world, and God's peculiar people, from Abraham onward, had been in training for thousands of years, were about to be manifested by miracles of healing, teaching, and living. Preparation was needful that appreciation might not be lost because of depraved insensibility, or blinded by the abundance and splendor of the revelation.

Verses 2, 3. Seven hundred years before, the forerunning herald of the approaching King had been distinctly foretold. Prophecy had to do with the future, whatever its immediate application and uses. The slow-stepping centuries fulfill its letter. Much is lost from the credentials of God's Word when we lose sight of fulfilled prophecy. Israel might fall into idolatry, and gross lapses seem to imperil all possibility of fulfilling their mission as the people of whom Christ should be born, but God's declared plan failed not. When the hour struck —

Verse 4. "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." His preaching was typical of all true preaching in any age. Christ's heralds prepare for his coming to the individual or community by the gospel of repent-

ance and remission of sins. Other preaching fails to produce any conscious need of Christ. When consciously ill, one welcomes the physician, not before.

Providence makes preparation for God's messengers and message: however startling the impending revolution, the way is prepared, the field ready for the seed. So in the story of our lesson.

Verse 5. There came to the privileged messenger "all the country of Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." In some true and large sense these multitudes were sent of God to John as really as he was sent to them.

The gospel does not create the needs it satisfies. Man feels sin's hurt, and welcomes the healing balm. Human guilt was never deeper or darker than in this hour of the Baptist's message of warning, and never was a message more eagerly welcomed. To feel one's sins, their guilt and ruin, is the best encouragement to hope for gracious rescue and healing; and yet this is the tempter's hour when he often brings the paralysis of despair, as if any sin were greater than God's compassion or the resources of his salvation. Not so thought all Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem. Whatever their need, hope and expectation spurred them to Jordan's waters and the faithful preaching. Their confession was true and saving, or the sure path to salvation. It meant (*a*) a declared need with fervent appeal for help; (*b*) thorough purpose of reformation. The latter is the chief requisite. The past may be recalled in all its darkest details; but only harm will follow if it bring a weak acquiescence, humiliated impotence, or reckless persistence in the old paths. Not thus did those penitents throng the great herald of the Son of God. Those were heroic days. Besetting sins might tighten their slimy coils, or array their

subtlest fascinations; they were unflinchingly spurned in hopeless banishment.

Verse 6. The preacher's life and presence were in keeping with his heroic work. No soft dalliance with weakness or sin, no luxurious self-indulgence could find encouragement in his hair mantle, leathern girdle, or his diet of locusts and wild honey. There was no virtue in ascetic living for him, or for his followers then or since; but that living was helpful to the service then in hand.

We are here taught an important lesson for all time: spiritual life and growth depend upon methods of culture as truly as does any other life. Methods and instruments may change with changing circumstances, but the law of adaptation is always indispensable to best life and success.

In any situation, confronted by any duty, after the first question: What can I do to cultivate the best life in my own soul? the next should be in quick succession: How can I best reach others with Christlike helpfulness? So asked General Booth and his heroic and marvelously gifted companion Catherine, whose life story, just published, offers a feast for every lover of Jesus in the record of successful methods, because all practical questions of administration were determined by their comparative efficiency. Hence the poke bonnet, the bass drum, the military subordination, the self-denial in personal expenses, the startling watchwords and banners. That they were divinely led thus to "make ready the way of the Lord," the glorious record of his incoming to multitudes hopelessly beyond the reach of existing agencies overwhelmingly proves. It is not to be claimed that all Christian workers should literally copy the Salvation Army, but it is true that their unflinching purpose to reach the lost and their flexibility in methods should have respect and imitation according to circumstances. That John was

divinely inspired appears in his prescient appreciation of the Christ he preached and whom he had never before seen. Himself the culmination and flower of the old dispensation, none born of woman greater than he, he foresees the glory of the new Sun of Righteousness and welcomes the eclipse sure to come to himself. Jesus' transcendent ministry was all in the future, but the Baptist had such appreciation of it that he declared (v. 7) himself unworthy to do for him the humblest menial service, such as usually fell to the lowest slave.

With the exception of this stern preacher in the wilderness, we know of none who correctly apprehended the aim and methods of Jesus' ministry. Expectation, almost without exception, was earthly and selfish. The Holy Ghost was unknown, and yet this almost ascetic preacher of repentance (v. 8) foresaw the quickening baptism of the Holy Spirit in all his Pentecostal outpouring. He adoringly welcomed the new dispensation, soon to leave the old, in its outward ritual, only as a relic of the past. We welcome any evidence that Jesus' ministry fulfilled infinite plans and was developed by infinite power and goodness. Such evidence abounds in all of our Lord's public life, but the same demonstration is delightfully manifest in this clear vision of John of the spiritual kingdom about to be introduced and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit. Nothing but a divine calling and education could have so qualified him. We are not surprised that Jesus knew the work in waiting for himself and entered upon it with this act of consecration described in our lesson; he was the son of God and could not but proceed steadily on his divine errand; but it is not so apparent why John should be so much in advance of his time and his fellows. Assuming that he was specially called of God and qualified, we not only have due respect for him; we also know the work he inaugurated as from God, and we are reas-

sured that that work will progress to final and complete triumph.

We now come (vs. 9–11) to the ceremonial initiation of Jesus to his three years of incarnate and unparalleled mission. How amazing, to the degree of profoundest mystery, that the Son of Man should follow in baptismal water the self-convicted and crushed penitents of a guilty generation in an age of phenomenal depravity! We should almost think Jordan's rushing stream would have acquired a ceremonial taint — that in such company the pure Jesus would have fatally prejudiced his whole mission by following their example.

Why should he seek baptism of an erring man when he, the stainless, came to bring a baptism of the Holy Spirit? This question answered, as we cannot hope fully to do, we gain great light upon Jesus' character and mission; we also learn much about our own duty from his persuasive and authoritative example. We do not wonder that, as Matthew tells us (3 : 14), "John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus' reply: "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," recognizes the apparent unfitness of the proceeding — that John's hesitation is not without reason. It also reveals Jesus' matured purpose and definiteness of plan which must proceed, as we may say, at any cost. It is interesting to note that this is his second recorded utterance and the first word of his public ministry. What does this reply mean? Its significance cannot be light. The occasion is exceptional, the speaker he of whom it was said most truly: "Never man spake like this man."

1. It does not mean that he needed any personal purification. We are sure that his holy countenance revealed, with noonday clearness, a beauty and glory unknown before, and not of earth; that in his eyes shone

the light of other worlds betokening a soul free from all sin. Had the ordinary uses of baptism applied to him, he would have so said to John; but that they had no such application John had declared and he had agreed with him.

2. Jesus did not acquire merit in and through his baptism. No one does; least of all the perfect One. In that sense he did not fulfill righteousness. If for "all righteousness" we read "all duty," we better understand his reply. Jesus' baptism was in the line of highest service in fulfillment of his redemptive work.

3. Jesus' baptism was an imposing ceremonial, inaugurating the one great priesthood of which Aaron's and all his descendants' was only typical and preparative. That ceremonial had gone on for ages in temples made with hands; now it used nature's great temple: for the brazen laver the flowing river; for golden robes the robes of righteousness; for the sacred oil the Holy Ghost (*cf. Geikie*). This baptism had regard to the world's appreciation, for all time, of the grandest epoch and highest service which ever entered the world's life. It was also an expression of Jesus' reverence for the priestly office in the past and for his own entrance upon it. However beyond and above earth's economy of methods and resources the work of Jesus, he had respect for that economy as he found it and as it is to continue in all time. He was to reach men, and all methods and agencies favorable to success were to be used. In the past the highest office of earth was the divinely appointed priesthood which was begun and perpetuated with an impressive and eloquent symbolism. About to enter upon an unending priesthood, infinitely more competent than any that had preceded, Jesus had respect to the past. He proclaimed his lineal succession and indicated his appreciation of the office. However exceptional his

power and plan, his mission was not a revolution; it was an evolution of the redemption carried forward in all the centuries gone. "He received it [baptism] as ratifying the mission of his great forerunner, the last greatest child of the Old Dispensation, the earliest herald of the New, the beautiful symbol of moral purification, and the humble inauguration of a ministry which came not to destroy but to fulfill." — *Farrar.*

4. But we do not measure the fullest or best significance of Jesus' baptism without taking into account his own individual consecration thereby to his mission and the will of the Father. This we must count as the primary explanation of the service and other results or aims as incidental. When Jesus came from Nazareth to John, it was his voluntary and public entrance upon the mission for which he left the glory he had with the Father before the world was. It was the same to him in kind, however transcendent in degree, as any individual consecration of life to-day. Every soul making full self-surrender to God and sealing that surrender by public and solemn ceremonial is literally following the footsteps of the Son of Man when he entered Jordan and came out, as Luke tells us (3 : 21), "praying." Fixing our thought upon that prayer, its communion with the Father in loving obedience, we get true apprehension of that service, at first mysterious, although always compelling reverence. "The baptism of Jesus was the last act of his private life." — *Edersheim.* "The baptism of Jesus was the pledge of his perfect self-sacrifice. . . . This act of subjection sealed his submission under the law, his historical fellowship of suffering with his people, and his passion. Hence it was, in principle, the decision of his conflict and his victory and therefore it was crowned with his glorification." — *Barnes.* That voice "out of the heavens: Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" speaks

volumes to the believer of the transcendent character and power of his Lord; but our first thought should be of its preciousness to Jesus, in its acceptance and sanction of his entrance upon the redemption he had then and there begun. Here was the beginning of that communion with the Father, through which the Son was equal to its inconceivable difficulties. Here was the Holy Trinity in glad fellowship. The Father spake; the Son received the message; and the Holy Spirit manifested himself in visible form. Bible story has many impressive theophanies but none equaling this. "He enters the waters as Jesus the Son of man. He rose from thence the Christ of God. No wonder there was sympathy with this supreme crisis in the distant regions of the universe." — *Geikie.*

This entrance of Jesus upon his unparalleled mission vividly teaches: —

I. *The helpfulness and divine sanction of ceremonial observance in due measure.*

So far as the record goes, the life of Jesus had small part in ritualistic obedience, apart from baptism; but in that alone, we have abundant testimony to the value of outward and formal expression of inner life and consecration. All showing of colors as belonging to the Lord's army, by our hosts of Christian Endeavorers, by sealing baptism in the sanctuary, or any service of reconsecration to be the Lord's irreversibly, is in principle a repetition of Jesus' baptism which was welcomed with such a wonderful message of acceptance. The same acceptance is in waiting for similar self-surrender, anywhere and at any time, although not as visibly declared.

II. *In all Christian service, to life's latest day, this keynote of our Lord's mission — "to fulfil all righteousness" — duty — should be supreme.*

If He, the sinless, the divine, waived every consideration, unrestrained by appearances when outwardly copy-

ing the example of earth's wickedest ones, and submitted himself to baptism from hands which needed that service from himself, how much more should we be perseveringly vigilant to omit no duty in the line of growth in holiness or usefulness in our individual mission! Many a sad lapse comes from fancied superiority to dependence upon regular and faithful ceremonial obedience.

III. *Recalling John's high privilege thus to officiate at our Lord's induction to the one transcendent mission for which the world waited, we better appreciate the honor of any similar service that "makes straight" to godly service the path of any soul.*

This is all summed up in the one word, ministry; but we must expand the word to its true range—far beyond any professional or peculiar order of service, and including any act, even the silent prayer which helps another in complete surrender to Christlike life and service.

IV. *Conversion to Christ and his service does not always require John's baptism in precise copying of dark sins bemoaned.*

It may come gently as the dawn and include full self-surrender, like that of Jesus at the Jordan; but that early and loving surrender withheld, and rebellious sins accumulated, providence is equal to bringing the deepest contrition by the surgery needed to prepare for the coming of the divine Healer. Sometimes this is done for communities or nations by widespread woe, by war or pestilence or financial stress and suffering. In some way a baptism of repentance floods the spirits of men preparative to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Happy the individual or nation that welcomes the Spirit's presence and healing guidance in ready obedience, without waiting for the fires of remorse to melt rebellious neglect.

S. Lewis B. Speare.

CHRIST'S TEMPTATION.

MATTHEW 4: 1–11.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness" etc.

THE narrative of the temptation richly rewards our thought, if we do not begin the study of it with some preconceived opinions which rob it of all significance.

There are two views very commonly held which empty the story of the temptation of all which can profit us. The first of these two concerns the person of our Lord. He did no sin. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled." He was "separate from sinners." Hence some have made haste to conclude that, hedged about from the very beginning of his earthly career by an infinite wisdom, he could not be really tempted. He was entirely insusceptible to temptation. He fully knew before he went into the wilderness in what guise the tempter would come to him, what artful suggestions he would make, and in what way he would be foiled. He knew of himself that it was impossible for him to sin: that the most wily words of the adversary would have no power over him. In this wrong view of the case the temptation in the wilderness loses its meaning. It becomes a mere formality. It is nothing better than a dramatic introduction to a life in which there was nothing dramatic.

It cannot add to our love for the great Captain of our salvation to know that he fought an inglorious battle with the adversary, in which he could not possibly be scarred. He is not our Example in the hour of temptation if he could not be tempted. The man who bares his breast to the bullets of the enemy cannot be incited to courage by

the unconcern of some one who fights beside him in armor which is bullet-proof. As little can we be helped by the example of Christ if this temptation of the devil could not seem to him for an instant an opportunity, a rational persuasion. We are mocked by our belief in a great High Priest who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" unless he was "in all points tempted like as we are."

We must admit the reality of the temptation. In the days of his flesh Christ was not omniscient. Whatever the range of his knowledge, it was limited; hence he could be tempted, and he was. It has been wisely said of him: "When he took on him the form of a servant, he became by his own will subject to everything which can affect human nature: to desires, wants, pains, sorrows, the hidings of God's face, the fear of cruel death, and death itself; all of which must have been so many motives and trials to character. It is not faith but the want of it which leads some to question the reality of the temptation." We must think of Christ at this time as a young man standing at the open gateway of his career. He was looking out with prophetic vision upon the untried work he was to do. We must conceive that at the time of his baptism he had been suddenly girded with miracle-working power. Then the temptation will be seen to be a probable, a natural, a *necessary* event. Such a trial *must* have come to him when the opportunities of his own wonderful life were opening before him. With special accessions of power special temptations always come to men. They give to the devil his best opportunity.

The other idea which has done much to spoil the story of the temptation concerns the person of the tempter. It has been thought to be necessary to the reality of the temptation that the devil should appear in bodily form, announcing his character and mission in his very appear-

ance and making it clear to the eyes of Christ that he was none other than the great adversary himself. But the tempter is a mighty spirit. He has no visible, bodily form. The Scriptures do not ascribe to him a corporeal existence. Perhaps 2 Cor. 11 : 14 may seem to some to teach otherwise ; but this text probably refers to the tempter's power to deceive the minds of men rather than to his appearance. When the devil tempts us he does not *appear ;* and Christ was *tempted in all points like as we are.* The devil would have no power to tempt us if he could assume a body which should be a true exponent of his infernal spirit. Much less could he have tempted our Lord. It is best to assume that the temptation was made with all the wisdom of the serpent. Personally but invisibly present, he appealed skillfully to thought, feeling, imagination, keeping his own personality out of sight as much as possible, though he did not succeed in wholly concealing it. I am compelled to believe that our Lord grappled with all the artful suggestions to evil which the adversary could bring to bear : that in this friendless solitude the mighty conflict was made which decided that not all the wiles of the devil could lead him aside from that holy life which he chose to live.

A solemn interest gathers about the narrative as we read that one agent concerned in it was the Spirit of God. Christ did not seek the temptation for himself, but being "full of the Holy Ghost" he was impelled to meet it. Matthew says : "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The Holy Spirit living in the heart does not, then, drive away the tempter or secure the soul from temptation. We are led to believe that Jesus was tempted *because he was full of the Holy Ghost.* Had he been called to some lower office than that of the Messiah ; had he been girded with some powers less wonderful than his own ; had some small

measure of the Spirit been granted him, he might have been called to some lower form of temptation easier to be resisted.

The higher form of temptation comes to the man of higher life. The adversary meets us upon whatever plane of life we may be living; and no freedom from his wiles comes to any of us because the Spirit of God dwells in our hearts. The tempter is not afraid to try his arts upon us in our best hours. He comes to us not in solitude only, but in society as well. He was bold enough to try his enticements upon the Son of Man, not in the wilderness merely, but before this occasion and afterward.

There is an easy philosophy of the soul which judges its powers and workings by the science of quantity. If the soul is full of the Spirit, then there is no room for temptation. This quantitative notion is simple and therefore attractive, but it is fallacious. With the science of measurements the soul has nothing to do. We cannot assume that if we are filled with the Spirit we shall be emptied of all temptation. "Full" and "empty," when applied to the soul, are misleading words. Neither can we take it for granted that the tempter is afraid of us in our most religious hours. The familiar couplet,

> And Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees,

has no warrant in the Scripture. Probably he is not quite so timorous.

It may be noticed also that our Lord's temptation followed closely the hour of his baptism. Baptism is a means of grace. It is a sign, and, when received by faith, a pledge of the presence of the Spirit. But it does not drive away the tempter. It may invite him to make a new assault. When the priest of the Romish Church, baptizing the child, breathes three times into its face,

saying, "Come out of this child, thou evil spirit, and make room for the Holy Ghost," he assumes for baptism a power which it does not possess.

Turning now to the first temptation we notice that a bodily appetite became the means of the first trial. The suggestion of the tempter was a very plausible and artful one. What moral objection is there to making bread out of stones? If one had the miracle-working power, why might he not use it to supply his own needs? Is it not right to suppose that such a suggestion really tempted our Lord, hardly beset as he was by the pangs of hunger? But with the temptation came also the way of escape. Our Lord came into the world to cast in his lot with his hungry, needy followers of every age. He came to share their trials; to gain the victory over temptation by such means as he would have them use. He came to teach his followers reliance upon the Word of God. He came to teach them by example a confidence in the Father's love and care. Had he used his miracle-working power to rescue himself from the pangs of hunger, he would have separated himself forever from the needy multitudes of his followers in every age and place.

But hunger could not shake his confidence in his Father's care. The miracle-working power could not demoralize him. Probably no one of us would be willing to receive the miracle-working power. It would put our virtue to a test far too severe. Hardly by divine aid can we be trusted with the poor powers we have.

But the Redeemer whom we worship and glorify made it evident at the very beginning of his earthly career that the possession of unlimited power suddenly bestowed could not tempt him to make use of his power for merely personal ends. Placed in a new office, with no example before him, called to walk an untried path, thrown back upon "the mere instinct of virtue" that was in him, he

chose with unerring wisdom the right path. A sublime confidence in God, whose Word is bread for the soul, enabled Christ to gain the victory. He has thus been able to inspire confidence in the hearts of multitudes of his followers when they were hungry and athirst. So can he aid every one of us.

The arch-enemy approached our Lord with a second temptation. He had seen that confidence in God was the shield with which his final attempt was warded off. *Could not confidence in God be made a means of temptation?* He suggested to our Lord that for the sake of a very good end he should adventure a little upon his confidence in God. Why not attract the eyes of men by showing how great his confidence really was? It is not at all necessary to suppose that Jesus was transported in body to the temple roof. The reality of the temptation is assured, if we assume that under the influence of the tempter it occurred to our Lord that by such an astounding miracle as casting himself down from a pinnacle of the temple he might at once win the admiration of the multitude and gain a following. The temptation was that he should achieve immediate fame by display; by venturing to show conspicuously his confidence in God. It was a subtle suggestion, piously supported by a text: "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Men are inclined to hero worship. They have unstinted admiration for the workers of wonders. To the multitudes thronging the temple it would have been a remarkable proof of confidence in God if one, relying upon him, should cast himself down from a lofty pinnacle and appear unharmed among them! How much would such a display of faith shorten his road to celebrity, and so gain for him just the opportunity which he desired!

But we worship a Redeemer who could not be enticed to presume upon the favor of God by making a display for what seemed to be a good end. We have proof of the perfect humility of Jesus in the fact that ostentation had no charms for him and of his perfect wisdom in the fact that he chose to put forth his claims in more unpretentious ways. It must needs be said that this humility and wisdom have not always been shown by Christ's followers. They have often been too ready to force their claim to the world's attention by some display of wealth or wit or learning. We are well acquainted with displays of power by men in high station. In legislative halls the air is wearied with eloquence which has for its real end a display of the powers of those who utter it. Upon platforms of reform, in conventions called in the name of religion, not infrequently have we heard the words of those who seemed to be glorifying their own surpassing powers. The Church of Rome has departed altogether from the simplicity of Christ in relying upon imposing ceremonials and pretended miracles to catch the eyes and captivate the fancy of her subjects. Indeed so accustomed are we to beholding power forcing its claim to the attention of men in some ostentatious way, that we are surprised at the man of wealth or wit or learning who really follows Christ in humble ways. The voice of society comes to men as Christ's brethren came to him, saying, "If thou do these things, show thyself to the world;" and too often the voice is heard and obeyed.

If the tempter comes to us appealing to that love of the applause of men which is in the hearts of all of us; if he tries to induce us to make our religion spectacular; to live in the eyes of others, to see ourselves in their admiration for us, — certainly we may be helped by him who in this point was "tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Our Lord foiled this temptation of the adversary by

his perfect reverence for God. He said: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." When confidence in God lacks reverence it may come to be mere presumption. When it is reverential it will not mislead us.

The third temptation is more difficult to understand than the first or second. Matthew states that "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."

There is no high mountain upon earth from which any considerable fraction of the "kingdoms of the world" can be looked upon. If we are to think of a mount of *vision*, it may have been in the wilderness as well as elsewhere. It is better to interpret the temptation by saying that as from an exceeding high mountain Jesus looked with prophetic vision upon all the world kingdoms of the present and the future. He saw spread out before him the mightiest monarchies of earth. He remembered that all of them were founded upon force and that his own rule of them would bring happiness and blessing. Why not, then, gird on the sword and call to his aid his own restless and ready nation? Why not meet the devil with his own weapons and achieve quickly by force what would be slowly gained by love? "Take my method of gaining control," the tempter said, "and universal dominion shall be yours." It was the natural and easy road to power. It would have avoided the humiliations which lay before him if he became the subject of the empire of Rome. With how much profit to the world might he have wielded temporal power? In Paradise Regained, Milton has set forth the whole story of the third temptation with matchless skill. He pictures our Lord as lost in meditation over the means by which his kingdom is to be founded and built up:—

> Victorious deeds
> Flamed in my heart: heroic acts; one while
> To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
> Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
> Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,
> Till truth were freed and equity restored.
> Yet held it more humane, more heavenly first
> By winning words to conquer willing hearts
> And make persuasion do the work of fear.

With the clearness of spiritual vision belonging to a sinless nature, Christ saw that the use of force in aggressive warfare would really change the nature of his kingdom. Hence his high choice was made to render no act of homage to the tempter by adopting his methods.

Few men are tempted by the vision of "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Yet it is worthy of remark that the three great popes of the middle ages, seeing the same resplendent vision before them, in the name of Christ made an opposite choice and attempted to seize and hold universal dominion. And very often in the history of Christendom the choice of Christ has been reversed and his followers have fallen under the temptation which he overcame.

Whenever we are tempted to make the end justify the means we can be helped by the example of Christ, who, finding all the glory of all the kingdoms of the earth within his grasp, chose to found a kingdom upon love, to become subject to the world-powers, and to trust himself unreservedly to his Father's love and care.

If we are tempted to worship place, power, wealth, wit, learning, and the dominion which these things confer, there is written for us the high sentence, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Willard G. Sperry.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS.

JOHN 1: 35–49.

"Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples;"

JOHN was now face to face with Him whose mission and glory the forerunners had so long heralded. The image does not pale, or disappoint the eyes of the great prophet of its unseen splendors. Nothing need be taken from the heroic outline of the vision. "Again on the morrow" the first impression as to Jesus' fulfillment of the types of Scripture and the ideal of the waiting heart of the world is confirmed. It has been the sight of this ever-enlarging figure of Christ before men's souls which has drawn and held alike his early and later followers. In our study of the first grouping of believers about this divine Master we note:—

I. *The unveiling of the living likeness of God.*

"And he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" Seldom until death has covered man with its shroud is the marble which is to be his memorial unveiled on its pedestal. Too often the real servant of his race has to wait for the hush of the grave before his merits are recognized by the public. But Jesus was accorded at once by his greatest subject the full title of his sacrificial mission. There was nothing hitherto in the natural life or experience of Christ which suggested him as a candidate for the cross with its bloody rites. The temple with its smoking altars did not rear its dome in the vale of Jordan. The associations of the place and time were not such as to make familiar the idea of the

Lamb of God. It must have been the anticipated form in which Jesus was looked for which forced this repeated exclamation from the prophet of the wilderness.

Two of John's followers, hearing the acclaim of their leader, beheld the colossal life from which one corner of the drapery had just fallen; and their words of fealty were, "Master, where abidest thou?" The God-man was pointed out to others, and Andrew added as he further drew aside the folds of the heavenly robes: "We have found the Messiah." As the news spread, and another beheld the unveiled features in fuller glory, Nathanael cried, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel." The grandest outlines of Christ's person and character were recognized at the commencement of his ministry. He created the impression on the minds of mature men, before he had worked a single miracle, that he was the Saviour of promise. His sacrificial, divine, and royal attributes were ascribed to him before he had performed anything. The Christ-work was as yet only a prophecy and a pledge. Jesus had done nothing, given nothing, taught nothing, yet he had won three strong men in one sunrise.

There was no occult method or magnetism used to gain this result. Jesus gathered his followers in the daylight, by the river, on the highway, not in tangled groves or temples. It was before four o'clock when the first converts joined him. The tenth hour was not one for visions or darkened closets. There were no rites of initiation or weird oaths: simply brawny men of the sea and the seine and the city "followed him." Nowadays new cults are concocted and propagated by grotesque characters and mysterious shibboleths. The trees of fig and olive were scant protection from the sun still high in the heavens, as comrades brought brothers to behold the world's Saviour. John's followers had already advanced some stages beyond

their countrymen of the old state church when they joined him. It shows the strong impression of the divine life, and an appreciation of Scripture truth, that these recent disciples of the Baptist should be ready to pass to a higher stage of service as soon as Jesus appears. It is often more difficult to take two steps toward God than one. There is a temptation to rest in the narrow and simply negative state of partial self-denial and criticism of others, rather than break away to wholly follow Christ. The two who heard John speak did not delay long to close with the new Master. Notwithstanding the loyalty of women, and their subsequent devotion, the early leaders of the Church who followed Jesus were men. The risk of vagary and enthusiastic exaggeration was thereby lessened, and an added natural security was given the future kingdom.

II. *The living pillars of the new temple.*

"One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew." This is the first name of honor on the great scroll of the immortals. Yet it is barely more than a signature. We look in vain for any record of great deeds accomplished by this man. We should, however, doubtless be in error if we deprecated his service as compared with that of others. He may have been like many whom we know in our churches who will scarcely go down to posterity, but who nevertheless have helped hold together the household of faith, put on delicate touches, here and there, and done the weekly and daily needful duties. One appreciates a sexton in the Lord's house who is a saint. The modest persons who have not had a street or park or society named after them, and are known as somebody's brother, yet in their time are recognized often as invaluable by leaders. Andrew had a running mate Simon, and probably earlier in the home or later in the church the brotherly ministry was a molding force in the life of the more illustrious member of the family.

I do not know as many of us would be willing to give up our Andrews for more prominent saints, if we were compelled to make a choice. Christ recognized the value, as he set the mold for future fellowships, of these husbands of the Church, who bind it together as well as lead it forward. A lasting service, which no future obscurity can detract from, was Andrew's presenting Peter to Jesus. Friend, if you can get that gifted comrade of yours on the track of the Saviour whom you have discovered, you will do more than many a teacher has accomplished for his classes in a lifetime.

Christ's characterization of the new disciple, "Thou shalt be called Cephas," a stone, indicates that he understood thoroughly the types of the men whom he attracted. It also suggests that the impetuous, enthusiastic followers of Jesus may be after all among the most stedfast. It is unfair to suspect a man's piety, and watch for his fall, because he is zealous and sometimes impulsive.

The second pair whom we must probably count among this early group are John and James, though their names are usually mentioned in the opposite order. One of the two who heard the desert prophet's welcome to the Saviour is best accounted for by supposing him to belong to this next honorable set of Christian twins. James and John were business partners of Andrew and Peter, and would likely be quickly aware of the change of religious faith on the part of members of the firm who left Judaism. We should be glad to have the name of the other "one of the two" who heard the Baptist speak and followed Jesus, just as we wish we knew who accompanied Cleopas on the way to Emmaus. Who more probably than the apostle John, who writes the story of our lesson and leaves out of account his own part in the first day's gathering of followers? Had not he who lay on Jesus' bosom also a brother whom he rejoiced to bring into the same sweet

fellowship? He who ran first to the empty sepulcher would not be late in discovering the glory of the anointed Son of God. It was this man who went out to bring in faithless Peter to Jesus' side in the hour of trial. John's Gospel is written as if he had heard and meditated from the beginning on those words: "Behold, the Lamb of God." James, the other "Son of Thunder," must have had similar traits in counsel and character to have been reckoned so often with his more famous brother. He won an earlier martyrdom, after he had guided the first councils of the Christian Church. The mother of these mates, like their father, had been spared to their mature manhood; and her energy and ambition, as well as blood, seem to have been inherited by her children. They were among the "well-born" followers of the Lord.

When Jesus "was minded to go forth into Galilee," he had a summons to serve. He was marking timber and quarries. He found his man. It was Philip. In him another practical disciple was added to the group. Though not demonstrative, he knew his Bible, and wanted his friend to share a good fortune. "Come and see" is a safe, if not attractive, invitation. When the Lord spoke of two hundred pennyworth of bread feeding five thousand, Philip could not see it. At the Last Supper this follower's characteristic came out when he said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." This was one we would call a solid man who wanted evidences. He got his acquaintance Nathanael interested as one would in real estate or stocks. But this guileless Israelite did not argue long when he saw the outlook. He did not discuss proofs with Philip. A slight notice on Christ's part touched the tender heart. Though looking for the kingdom of God, Nathanael did not see how it could come out of Nazareth. But a gentle word from Jesus brought up the waters of a deep fountain in the man's soul. He was one of those

shy spirits who can be found in pious homes, who are born near the border of the better world. They really love Christ before they know him, but they do not see how he can save them. The Gospel seems too good to be true. There are many such in our Christian families; and a little stirring of the soil, a gentle personal sympathy, brings forth a rich experience and fruitage of grace.

These six men stand out now as the pillars of the new tabernacle, three twin pairs like Jachin and Boaz. They are men of character, of understanding, and some family, and not from the unclassified material of communities. These, Peter, James, and Philip, are more striking in their outlines of strength; but the others are their complements in beauty and endurance.

III. *The principles of progress of the new structure.*

A new pattern was provided now by which the temple of God was to be completed. Instead of that given on the Mount, men were to copy that which was before them in living form. "Follow me" was a noble summons from such an one as the Saviour. He did not enroll slaves to do servile work, or serve an apprenticeship in useless and poorly paid tasks. The things small and great which Christ essayed might be lived after him. Other founders of communities have often compelled novitiates to do the menial and degrading offices about their persons and establishment. Lawrence Oliphant, the late brilliant English writer, once left his family to come to America, and was set at stable duties by the order of a living leader of a communistic society. Jesus did not suffer men to exact attention to his bodily wants, or to make much of his earthly necessities. His followers might pull an oar while he slept or was weary; but there is no emphasis on their doing the common things of life more than he. His house and raiment and temporal possessions were not what were held up as objects of veneration. An illustri-

ous subject, Prazatto, was on one occasion in attendance on Charles V. The emperor, when in the barber's hands, asked his courtier what reward he should bestow upon him for services in carrying corn to Spain in time of scarcity. Prazatto replied: "I am rich enough not to desire wealth; I am king on board my own carracks, and need not desire honors; I am a citizen of Ragusa, and desire no titles; but as a memento of your favor you may give me this towel." Our Master never would have suffered free men to ask for such souvenirs. "Follow me" was an offer of honor and triumph, as well as a charge to the lowly tasks of earth. Christ was pleased at delicate attentions; but his most frequent tests of friendship were in the regard of his followers for their fellows. The great collector of elegant books used to write in his editions, *Grollier et amicorum*. What was for Christ was for those whom he loved.

The declaration of one man's conviction that Jesus was the Lamb of God sent its truth to the next souls. Something spoken propels power into the hearts of associates. The dynamic principle operates in grace. You must not only see lightning, but feel its effect, its results. Christ created a desire in men for himself. The first inquiry meeting was held under the trees by Jordan. Christ let men question him. He did not begin by telling them everything. There is a tide going out to God, which the seeker for souls watches. The Spirit creates an appetite for the things of Christ. People make the best Christians who when the heart is touched look about for the Saviour. They do not wait till all is explained to them. "What seek ye?" was the strongest question which met the men tracking Jesus. Have you not some idea formed of what you desire? Is there not something definite which you are searching for? Do not bring forward a confused jumble of manuscripts out of your pocket, and of questions as to

the creation of the universe. What does your soul crave? Is it the cleansing and life of the Lamb of God? Something direct, a special need had been felt by the men who had seen Jesus. They found what they sought.

The interview was satisfactory. They could invite others to the same communion. Men brought their brethren. Thus was another permanent principle of the progress of the kingdom illustrated. Speech spreads the gospel. The Christ is preparing the hearts. Men are to begin with those nearest to them, not make skips to a wider sphere. If they don't talk the Christ life to those next them, they must live it. Jesus shows now where you are to begin in your own home or your place of business. Andrew and John started in their own families, at their fish-wharf, to catch men for the kingdom. Philip was of the same city as Andrew and Peter, Bethsaida. The Christian gets his fellow citizen to follow his Master. If you can't make an impression on your neighbor for good, your money draft will be discounted when it goes to convert the heathen. A good situation for a university of righteousness is in the street where you have gotten riches. Is your God good enough for your partner, friend? These men were Orientals, accustomed to the easy ways of warm climates. They had not Saxon push and vigor. Yet they commended their Saviour and his gospel to their own friends and neighborhood, and they stamped it for circulation throughout the world. John had preached to multitudes by the Jordan; but now, instead of gathering crowds, the new converts work along the natural lines of cleavage, in the groups and guilds with which they are familiar, and illustrate a method which must be first and constant amid all other agencies for the completion of the kingdom of Christ.

William R. Campbell.

FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS.

JOHN 2:1–11.

"This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

THUS simply does John conclude his narrative of Christ's first miracle. John alone tells the story and he tells it with a simplicity and grace superb. Only a few light touches, but the picture is complete. Only a dozen sentences, but every sentence weighs. All is vivid, picturesque, and real. The perplexed mother, the obedient servants, the believing disciples, the serene and mighty Jesus — they all stand out so lifelike and so human that we almost feel as though we ourselves were present at the marriage feast in Cana.

John tells the story briefly and he leaves it quite abruptly. With not a word of surprise or praise, or a syllable of didactic comment, he pauses just long enough to tell us that Jesus' disciples believed on him, and then hastens on to tell of other works which manifest the glory of him who is full of grace and truth.

We are evidently reading the words of an eyewitness, a man who has not only seen one miracle of Jesus but who has been so long with him that great deeds wrought by him seem natural and easy. The tumults of amazement which must once have filled the soul of John have long since melted down into tranquil and adoring love. This is why he can say so quietly, "and manifested his glory."

To John a miracle is a sign. It points to something higher than itself. It is not a mere prodigy or portent,

a flash of omnipotence to startle curiosity or stir amazement. A miracle wrought by Jesus is a manifestation of his glory, a revelation of his Person.

Thus by the use of a single word John lifts us at once above the world of magicians and conjurers with their tricks that startle and feats that astound, and brings us into the presence of moral forces working for ethical ends. John is not telling us of a Jewish wizard: he is telling us of God manifest in the flesh. He narrates seven miracles besides the one which now invites our study, but in every case the story is given not to excite our wonder but to increase our faith in him who is the Way, the Truth, the Life. The mighty works of Jesus — so John feels — are beams of light flashing from the sun. They do not flash to dazzle the eyes, but to guide the feet of men to him of whom Isaiah wrote: "And his name shall be called Wonderful."

John moves through his Gospel with an earnest and stedfast purpose. We can feel the last verse of chapter twenty in the telling of this first miracle. His earnestness burns up superfluous words. There is no reference to the bewilderment and gossip which must have followed the doing of so great a deed. Six short words sum up for us the result of Christ's first miracle: "And his disciples believed on him." And what better message could John have given us? It is in line with his great purpose. His whole Gospel is written — so he tells us — that we may believe, and there is no greater help to perplexed and wavering faith than the assurance of the belief of others.

It may seem strange to some, however, this reference to the belief of the disciples, and the question may arise, Did not his disciples believe on him before? The two who followed the Master along the bank of Jordan and who abode with him from the tenth hour onward to the closing of the day, did they not then and there believe?

Else how could Simon in exultant tone say to his brother, "We have found the Messiah"? Did not Philip believe on the very day when Jesus found him? Else what did he mean when he said to Nathanael, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write"? Did not Nathanael from the very first believe? Else how explain his triumphant confession, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel"? Did not all these, along with the disciple whom John leaves nameless, believe on him before the marriage feast? Else why should they have gathered themselves about him and have accompanied him to Cana? Why does John in a narrative provokingly concise make room for these apparently unnecessary words — "His disciples believed on him"?

This little clause gives us an insight into John's conception of belief. Belief is one of the central words not only of John's Gospel but of the entire New Testament. Jesus, in all the Gopels, is represented as constantly urging men to believe, assuring them that it will be well or ill with them according to their belief. And all the New Testament writers repeat in changing phrases and with varying accent what the Master said.

And yet, central as this word is, and vital as is a right comprehension of its meaning, there is no other word, perhaps, in all the Bible around which so many misunderstandings and false interpretations have gathered, no other word about whose meaning men to-day are more bewildered and confused. Belief! What is it? At once we hear a chaos of conflicting answers. One makes the word thin and shallow, emptying it of the glory with which the Master filled it; another makes it so technical and so mysterious that ordinary minds stumble as they strive to grasp its meaning. Again and again belief has been made synonymous with opinion, and men have been called believers because of their intellectual views. The

acceptation of a certain opinion has been deemed sufficient to prove a man a Christian, while the rejection of that opinion has banished him from the communion of saints and numbered him among the lost. Opinions have been woven into complex systems and spun into elaborate creeds, and believing on Jesus has too frequently degenerated into a willingness to subscribe to theories of his person or to assent to speculations concerning his passion or his work.

Not so does the disciple whom Jesus loved ever use this great word — belief. With John belief is always personal devotion, moral attachment, loving trust. To believe on Jesus is to enter into fellowship with Jesus, to make him the friend and guide, the pattern and inspiration of one's life.

And thus we see why John stops to tell us that Jesus' disciples believed on him. Belief is not a bundle of opinions, a package of conceptions, a batch of dogmas, a bunch of guesses, a nod of the intellect, a freak of the fancy, a spasm of the emotions. It is an expanding disposition of heart, a widening surrender of will, a ripening richness of spirit, a deepening personal devotion which grows from day to day and which is changed from glory unto glory. Belief is a living, changing, growing thing. It is never the same to-day that it was yesterday. It will be different still to-morrow. Belief that can see new manifestations of God's glory and not become something more than what it was before the revelation came is either dead or dying. The belief of the disciples was alive and growing. John joyfully records the fact. We have often overlooked the importance of what he tells us. The disciples believed on Jesus before the water was changed to wine, but the belief before the miracle was thin and colorless compared with the belief that followed. They had heard him speak, and his words had been to them the words of an inspiring

prophet; but now for the first time they see him act and his first act proclaims him the Son of God. Mighty both in deed and word the disciples give themselves up to him with a devotion that is altogether new. By this stroke of omnipotence they are ushered into a larger world with higher skies. The change that came to the obedient water was not more wonderful than the change which came to the hearts of the disciples. The glare of the outward miracle has blinded us to the inward miracle of transfiguring grace. The wine was temporal and only for a day, but the heart-devotion which was then made intenser and the faith which there became finer and firmer were woven as indestructible threads into the fabric of the church of God. This miracle was the first step in the shining stairway of manifested glory up which the disciples made their way to a faith which conquered the world.

And so the lesson of this miracle is a lesson of belief, a lesson of which we are evermore in need. All the problems of the religious life reduce themselves at last to this: How to increase belief. The weakest and the strongest of us never outgrow the need of praying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." We fail to read to highest purpose the record of Christ's first miracle unless we read it in such a way as to stimulate and strengthen faith.

The story carries us at once into the atmosphere of believing souls. It was faith in Jesus that led his mother to lay her perplexity before him, wrapped up so modestly in the words, "They have no wine." "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." This was Jesus' only answer, but Mary was satisfied completely.

To us these words of Jesus sound brusque to the verge of curtness, but it is because we do not catch the accent with which they fell from Jesus' lips. A repulse they

seem to us, but repulses cannot quench a faith like Mary's. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," was her immediate message to the servants. Would that our faith might thus mount upward when we seem to be repulsed.

After these brave words of Mary we are prepared for all that follows. "Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." "Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast" — and "they bare it." What swift and unquestioning obedience! Well would it be with us should we imitate these servants. It is in the atmosphere of obedience that Christ's miracles become possible. The Son of God cannot manifest his glory without the help of an obedient soul. These nameless servants at the feast in Cana, little dreaming of the importance of the work they did, were John the Baptists preparing the way of the Lord. You and I can afford to do little things if Jesus command that they be done. It is only through man's doing of little things that God's glory shall some day fill the world. The Master's words cannot be changed, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments." And thus obedience becomes the index and the test of faith.

It is not, however, what Mary said or the servants did that leaves a lasting impress on the heart as we read the story of the wedding feast in Cana. It is what Jesus did that gives the story vitality and deathless fascination.

And yet what Jesus did is not so much as even mentioned. We feel his deed, but we do not see him do it. The waterpots are filled with water. The wine is carried to the ruler of the feast. That is all. Somewhere between the two obediences of the servants the mighty will of Jesus found room for action. He acted silently and in the dark. His glory burst into flame inside the waterpots of stone. Even God's manifested glory is always veiled.

We cannot look upon him with unshielded eyes, and live.

The water was changed to wine. How was it done? We do not know. God hides his deepest secrets from our sight. Whether he works inside the tender texture of a grape-skin or inside the waterpots of stone he does not allow us to grasp the secret of how water changes into wine. He does not give us explanations: He gives us wine. To follow him in all his ways is lovingly denied us, but he permits us to drink from many a goblet which his never-failing mercy has made full.

In these days when men are overcurious, and impatient with all things hard to understand, it will be profitable to remember that though the disciples did not understand the process by which the water became wine, they believed all the more on Jesus. It is a lesson for our times. If we cannot understand how God's Spirit guided the men who wrote the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, we should not therefore refuse to drink their inspiration and to avail ourselves of the strength which they abundantly supply. Let us drink this spiritual wine first, and ask our questions afterward. If we cannot understand Jesus in all the depths of his personality, and cannot trace out clearly his relations to the Father, we are nevertheless worthy of condemnation if we fail to drink in the light and life and love which God in Him is offering to the world. The peasants at the feast in Cana drank the wine so generously provided, and we are foolish if, puffed up by knowledge, we push away the cup which God in Christ is pressing to our lips.

The miracles of Jesus are not confined within the limits of the Bible. The world is full of his presence. Modern history is crowded with signs which manifest his glory. Races redeemed, nations disenthralled, islands once cannibal now prayerful and peaceful, water turned to wine at

a thousand feasts the great world over — these are signs of Jesus which manifest his glory.

And even more convincing signs than these it is possible for us to have — miracles wrought within ourselves. Affections purified, sympathies widened, ideals elevated, character sweetened, enriched, and glorified, life growing deeper and diviner with the passing years — who can see and feel all this taking place in his soul without realizing that it is another of Christ's signs through which he is manifesting his glory! And at each new disclosure of his grace in our heart may we, like the disciples at the marriage feast in Cana, give ourselves up to him with a fresh devotion, sanctify ourselves with a new consecration, and with widening and deepening love believe on him.

Charles E. Jefferson.

JESUS CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

JOHN 2: 13–25.

"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

THERE is a marginal reference at this passage to Luke 2: 49, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" the old version being, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" as though, in the thought of the revisers, a chief element of the Father's business was to keep sacred the Father's house.

Nothing less than such an exalted view of the sanctuary could explain this event in the Saviour's ministry.

Every male among the Jews being required to be at the Passover, Jesus went, obeying his rule to "fulfill all righteousness." Arriving in the outer enclosure of the temple, the Court of the Gentiles, he found that the sale there of animals for sacrifice and the business of exchanging money, which were quite legitimate in themselves, had been perverted into a serious evil. Observing the strife and disorder which they were producing, he saw that it was the Father's business, just then, to work a radical reformation, which he at once accomplished.

The general theme suggested here, Reverence for the sanctuary, is one deserving earnest study. Christian churches differ much as to what this sentiment is, essentially, and how it should be manifested. The Puritan fathers honored Jehovah, his name, his word, his law, but they had less regard than was common in the English church for the place where he was to be worshiped: — and

their view has been handed down in considerable measure to their descendants.

An Episcopalian writer defines their idea at certain practical points as follows: "Our churches are never used except for religious services." "Our chapels are consecrated if they are to be used exclusively for worship; otherwise not." "Sometimes when a chapel must serve all the needs of a congregation, the chancel end is screened off for the time." "Parish houses which are used for concerts, lectures, etc., are never consecrated."

Respecting the conviction of these friends, other churches ask whether the whole of a building, though variously employed, may not be formally set apart for the services of religion. The "Institutional Church," one of our modern inventions, is designed to provide not only worship on the Sabbath but much of other benefit during the week; it has classes for instruction, charitable work, industrial schools, means of recreation for old and young; its aim being, in such ways, to utilize the whole building for the good of the people, and especially to open for them a door into the heavenly kingdom. If this is good Christian work, why may it not all be devoted to the Master? So of churches that do not undertake the Father's business in such a multifarious way: their social life as well as that more strictly religious may be promoting the best spiritual ends. The prophet wrote, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLY UNTO THE LORD"; the idea of which being that all pleasure, all work, all life, may be devoted honestly, supremely, to the service of God. While, however, we emphasize this side of the truth, we realize the propriety of reserving, so far as possible, some part of a church building for purposes of worship.

God said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." If he is everywhere, how

can he be anywhere in particular? In this sense, that he is, in certain places, peculiarly manifest in some quality, some aspect of his being. What made the open field where Jacob dreamed, the House of God? It was the divine appearing; it was the ladder resting upon the ground and stretching far away to the skies, upon which the angels were passing to and fro; it was the voice that spoke from heaven. The Patriarch's exclamation, "The Lord is in this place," is rendered in one of the old versions, "The glory of the Lord dwelleth here."

It was in the Tabernacle that the Israelites had the visible sign of the divine glory. This House of God was made, by divine command, of the richest and most elegant materials; it was so constructed that it could be taken to pieces when the people marched and put together when they halted and went into camp. When they came to reside permanently in Canaan, the tabernacle was changed to the temple, preserving to them the essential thing, a center of special religious service. And this is the warrant, we understand, for erecting in our time edifices designed for such purpose, built often at great cost, invested with every attraction which beauty and taste can impart, and yet, whatever their elegance, of no sanctity except so far as by honest prayer and praise they are indeed the very House of God.

So far as this conviction prevails, the sanctuary will be honored in various ways.

One way to show it reverence is to attend its worship.

It is a reason for encouragement that such a mind is so common among Christian people, that they believe with the Psalmist, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"; that his experience is so generally theirs, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

We are grateful too that so many others who are not

prepared yet to begin openly a Christian life are willing to join us to this extent, attending habitually our religious services and helping to sustain them by their generous support. In proportion as it is realized that Christian institutions are of divine appointment, that they represent the divine presence and power, there will be fewer concerning whom it has to be asked, as it was in the days of Nehemiah, "Why is the house of God forsaken?"

Another way to show reverence for the sanctuary is to participate in its worship. There may be reverence in *posture.*

In this we do not need to copy the liturgical churches; it would be sufficient to imitate our own denominational ancestors, who used to stand in the singing or the prayer or both; sometimes too when the exercise was protracted to an extent which to us would seem unbearable.

Congregations now vary about this. In some of them a minister who rises to pray is embarrassed to observe that the people make so little change of position; in others the propriety is recognized, generally, of taking some attitude of devotion.

In a deaf and dumb church, one not accustomed to their ways is surprised to notice that during prayer they all keep their eyes open. Yes, that is their only way to hear, through their eyes; yet this does not distract them, for, it is observed, their sight is fixed upon the one who leads the service. People, however, who can hear, understand that it is, on the whole, easier to pray with the eyes closed, to prevent all distraction. That is the reason for bowing the head, or kneeling or standing or any other posture which helps devotion.

The prophet, urging a devout behavior in the place of worship, said: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," which was only the spirit of the command given to Moses out of the burning bush: "Put off

thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

There may be reverence in *speech.*

It is pleasant to have a whole congregation, old and young, read the Scripture together, but they do this fitly only as they remember that they are repeating the very Word of God.

Those who lead in worship feel their responsibility. A minister knows it is possible for him to read or preach in a perfunctory, irreverent way, as a mere form. Those who direct other parts of the service understand, doubtless, their need of care.

In the early centuries choristers and choirs were ordained for their sacred office as the minister was for his. A commission given them by the presbyter administering the ordination was this: "See that what thou singest with thy mouth, thou believest also with thy heart: and that what thou believest in thy heart thou confirmest in thy life."

That exhortation, however, is one which is to be heeded by the entire congregation. Paul wrote: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." That is, prayer and singing are, in this regard, put upon precisely the same level; if they are not honest but are mere unmeaning sound, they are sacrifice that is "an abomination to the Lord."

There may be reverence in *thought.*

It must be difficult sometimes for a man who has been harassed throughout the week with secular affairs to shut them out of his mind and lock the door fast when he comes to church; especially if, for an hour before service, he has been poring over a Sunday newspaper with its record of stocks, amusements, politics, etc. If his thought can be filled with such things, the adversary knows that the religious services are less likely to do him

any good. The heathen ruler before Christ who desired to spoil the worship of the Jews did not make upon them an open assault, but, it is related, provided a counter attraction. He built a great ampitheater for the most exciting games, placing it in such a position that the people going up to the Temple could not help looking down and seeing the sports in full operation. That is a device of the tempter not confined to those early days.

Sometimes it is urged that a liturgy is good for such an emergency, that it holds the mind to spiritual things; but no, not of necessity; one can get used to set forms, saying them over till they are the vainest repetition. Whether they are employed or not, there has to be the earnest prayer, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." There has to be, too, an earnest will to compel thought in the right direction.

There is much of Christian wisdom in the old lines concerning a proper frame for the sanctuary: —

> Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part;
> Bring not thy plow, thy plots, thy pleasures thither;
> Christ purged his temple; so must thou thine heart,
> All worldly thoughts are but thieves met together
> To cozen thee! Look to thine actions well,
> For churches either are our heaven or our hell.

It is such a spirit which is illustrated by the Saviour in this passage from John. Several circumstances show the emphasis which he laid upon it.

We observe that he purged the temple twice — here, soon after the miracle at Cana, and again during Passion Week; thus, at the beginning and at the close of his ministry, impressing this lesson, the sanctity of God's House.

We observe the *earnestness* with which he performed the act.

A picture in one of the commentaries represents him

going among the cattlemen and money-changers with a scourge in his hand and with a look on his face very much like one of human impatience and anger. There is no ground for that; still he did manifest a spirit which recalled to the disciples the Psalm, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

We observe the *divine authority* which he claimed.

The prophets were accustomed to do something supernatural to prove their commission; so the Jews said to Jesus: "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" Show us, they meant, your commission. He replied: "I will; this body of mine is to be destroyed, but in three days I will raise it again." Even the disciples did not understand what he meant, but they remembered it after the resurrection. It must have been still more mysterious to the Jews. Jerome remarked that for Jesus to take his little scourge and drive those men out of the temple was a miracle. At least it is plain that something in his words, his look, his manner, commanded their respect, their awe; convicted them of their sin; assured them that he had with divine authority purified the sanctuary, so that instead of being a "den of thieves" as they had made it, it was now what it ought to be, "an house of prayer for all people."

Such circumstances emphasize the truth proclaimed by our Lord.

If we might have his mind at this point, nothing would so quicken all our spiritual life.

We can imagine what an inspiration it must have been to the Jews to have in their worship, as they did, the visible presence of God. They needed it, we say; they were such children. But are not we too children? There is no thing which we need more really than this — to have our sanctuaries cleansed; to look upon the Shekinah; to see the cloud over the mercy seat; to hear, from between

the cherubim, the Father's voice giving us our spiritual revelations, our orders for service, our grace sufficient for Christian living and Christian work, our promise sure of a place, by and by, among the sanctified who are "before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple."

Theodore J. Holmes.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

JOHN 3: 1–16.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

IN considering these words of our Lord I ask you to notice in the first place the idea of absolute *necessity* which they imply. He does not say, "Except a man be born again, he *shall* not see the kingdom of God;" but he says he *cannot* see the kingdom. This condition is not one which depends upon the mere arbitrary will of God, but it depends upon the very nature of things. The kingdom of God is such that a person must by necessity be spiritually made over before he can become a member of it. It is as though some traveler should return to us from a country which we have never explored and tell us what course we must pursue in order to pass safely and pleasantly through it.

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it. Those desires and appetites which are born of the flesh cannot be exercised there. Unless the spiritual nature is developed, there can be no enjoyment in spiritual things. Hence the necessity of the new birth — a coming into a life which is the beginning of the heavenly life.

The new birth is not a change in degree, but in *kind*. It is not a growing better on the old plane of life, but it is the coming up into a new and higher plane. It is not reformation, it is regeneration. The Bible is very explicit on this point, and uses a great variety of figurative terms to express it. It speaks of the change as a spiritual re-

production, a being born over again, and he who has thus experienced the new birth is said to be "a new creature in Christ Jesus unto good works." He has put off the old man and put on the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." With him "old things have passed away; behold all things are become new." He has passed from death unto life, from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan to the power of God. And furthermore, as if anticipating the unscriptural doctrine that a mere reformation is all that is needed, an apostle declares to the contrary, saying, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now whatever interpretation we give to these passages we cannot escape the conviction that they refer to a radical change: a revolution and new creation of the entire spiritual man.

Let us try to see what this change involves. The change takes place in the inner or spiritual nature, that part of man which loves and thinks and wills; and it begins with a change of the dominant love.

Your dominant love is the love which gives the tone and character to your whole life. As you love, so are you.

This may be illustrated in a great many ways. Here, for example, is a man who is passionately fond of study: that fondness gives the impulse and direction to his whole life. Under whatever circumstances he may be placed he will be a student. Here is another who loves art. His life throughout bears upon it the stamp of this passion. Here is still another who loves the excitement of trade, and out of this love there is developed the shrewd, energetic character of the business man.

Thus while in every life there may be a great many loves, there is always one love which is stronger than the

others, and which determines, upon the whole, the character of the man.

Now when we come to examine the different objects upon which the heart may be fixed we find that they fall into two general classes which may stand respectively under the two terms, self and God. Upon one of these two objects the prevailing love must be ultimately fixed.

Naturally man is a selfish being. Before his conversion he loves self more than he loves God and humanity, and that love is accordingly shaping for him a character which would be out of place in the kingdom of God. For such a man to be born again is to get a new prevailing love. A new affection takes the place of the old one, and as a result the whole character is changed from the very roots, and soon there begin to appear the blessed fruits of righteousness.

This brings us to another point: the way in which this change is effected.

First of all must be mentioned the direct agency of God. The sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Jesus not only declares that a man must be born again, but that he must be born of the Spirit.

As God acts upon the tiny seed which is buried in the earth, surrounding it with the necessary conditions of germination and growth, pouring upon it the sunshine and the rain, and conducting it up into a thing of strength and beauty: so does he bring into life the germ of a holy love in the human heart, and bring to bear upon it those influences which are adapted to increase its growth.

How God acts upon the soul so as to change the reigning love we cannot tell. It is a mystery into which the finite mind is not permitted to peer; but that he does so act there is abundant proof.

But man himself has also something to do in effecting

this change. It is for him to make a definite, decisive choice. He must choose whom he will serve.

He has been engaged in selfish pleasures and wrong actions. He must choose to give up his old course of life, and to enter upon a new and a better way. He has kept his heart closed against God. He must choose to open it, that God may enter and there abide. He must put forth a choice in the matter very much as he does when he is about to start on a journey or undertake an important enterprise. There must be a point at which he says, "I will;" and from that point onwards all his actions must be done with reference to that purpose.

It is of the utmost importance that we bear this in mind, for hundreds are not Christians to-day, simply from an apparent misunderstanding of their own responsibility in the matter. They say, "I would like to be a Christian," but you never hear them saying, "I will be a Christian." They are spending their days in that wretched wilderness of doubt and anxiety which lies between "I would like to" and "I will." They have somehow got the idea that God is going to force them into the Christian life, that he is going to violate their free wills and demolish their personality, and new-create them whether they will or no. All this is wrong. While it is true that we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts, it is also true that we cannot be saved without some effort of our own. The thing about which we are to be concerned is our own act. We are to repent, and to repent now. We are to choose this day whom we will serve. We are to say "I will" with a determined purpose, and to leave the results with God.

It is sometimes urged as an objection against the doctrine of the new birth that it makes everything of conversion and nothing of character. "You bring every influence to bear upon the will," says the objector, "and

as soon as you have persuaded the enquirer to make the choice of which you speak you call him a Christian, regardless of the character which he may develop afterwards." This is a common objection, but as regards the nature of the conversion itself the charge is entirely false. Conversion is not a mere holy choice; but it is the first holy choice in a series; and not merely this but it is "an influential choice which stands so related to the previous and subsequent life that it breaks up the habit of wrong-doing and starts a habit of right-doing." It is thus an act which is linked to other acts. It is the first step in a righteous life; the foundation stone of a good character. A man is not converted unless the whole of his after life bears the unmistakable stamp of his conversion — unless his character gives manifold proof that it is shaped by an indwelling and ruling love to God.

And this is just wherein the Biblical doctrine of the new birth surpasses in effectiveness all other theories for elevating and reforming the race. It strikes at the root of the matter. It does not attempt to smother the evil under an elaborate patchwork of good deeds; but it puts a new principle into the heart which drives out the evil and then flows naturally into good deeds and good thoughts as the lily bulb expands into stalk and flower. It does not say to the drunkard, "Reform," but it says to him, "Repent." Not "Do better," but "Be better;" not "Try again," but "Be born again." "Get a new reigning love into your heart, for not till you love God supremely will you love your cups less."

One of our New England daily papers in commenting on the alarming spread of intemperance and immorality, and deploring the inability of law to check it, said: "Instead of making any more laws, had we not better fall back upon the old-fashioned doctrine of conversion?"

Yes, we had; and the sooner our reformers and legisla-

tors realize the fact the better will it be for the rising generation.

Yes, my friend; the old-fashioned doctrine of conversion, — as old as the Christian religion itself, — old but ever new, — this is the truth which Christ lays upon your conscience to-day as he laid it upon the conscience of Nicodemus in the far-away youth time of Christianity. To live right your heart must be right, and your heart cannot be right till God's Spirit has made it over and filled it with new purposes and new desires. Pray, choose, decide.

Act! act! in the living present.

Charles A. Dickinson.

JESUS AT JACOB'S WELL.

JOHN 4: 9–26.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.— John 4: 13, 14.

WE stand by Jacob's well at Sychar. If we look down, the clear waters below reflect the blue above. If around, the hills and valleys speak to us of heavenly things. Sychar is historic ground, where great men walked and great deeds were done. To know some of these is well. It is well to know that here Abram raised the first altar to God. It is better to know that here was once the Lamb of God who laid himself upon the altar for our redemption. It is well to see Ebal and Gerizim lifting their rugged summits above yonder plain, remembering that from their sides the curses and blessings of the Law were read to assembled Israel. It is better to behold Him who came not to destroy but to fulfill the Law. It is well to recall that somewhere here Joseph's bones turned to dust, but better to recall One who walked these highways, whom no grave could imprison nor death conquer. It is worth while to learn that this well was dug by the patriarch Jacob, that of it he and his drank; that though now choked by rubbish it goes down one hundred feet and more into the solid rock. Far better is it to be told that Jesus sat once on this curb against which we lean, and told a thirsting soul that he was the living water of which men may drink and thirst no more — yea, may themselves become through Him wells of water springing up into

eternal life. Learn the names of patriarchs and prophets who once tented and worshiped here, but let the Name above every name be to you brightest of them all. Learn all lessons in the geography of Sychar, but, most of all, its lessons of grace. Lessons in grace are better than lessons in geography. Make more of Jesus than of Jacob.

This narrative teaches us the nearness of Jesus. Jesus was within reaching distance of the woman of Samaria. He sat beside her. His eyes looked into hers. His voice sounded in her ears. To his very lips she could have held the cup of water for which he asked. Jesus is always as near to men. There are no desert spaces nor unbridged rivers nor impassable mountains between the loving heart and its loving Father. We see not his face? Our eyes are dim. We hear not his voice? Our ears are dull. God is so near we need not straighten the arm to touch him. Whether wearied we sit beside the way, or with light feet climb the mountain; whether the billows roll over us or we mount the waves; whether we grope in the dark or walk in the light; whether we wake or sleep, or live or die, — God is by our side. Not his promises alone, but history and our experience prove it. Men standing around Jesus as he went down into Jordan for baptism did not see God near, but lo! the descending dove and the voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He went into Gethsemane alone, we would have said, but behold! the strengthening angel! He went up on Calvary, yet, while priests exult and ruffians jeer, in the hour when God seems farthest away He makes known his presence in darkening sky and rocking earth and opening graves. The young Hebrews are flung into the glowing furnace, but God is there. Another is thrust in the lion's den; God is there. A prophet is shut up in a beleaguered city; God is there. The disciples toil at the oars with fearful hearts; Jesus is

at hand. If we have learned anything, it is that God is with us. Furnace doors may shut God's children in, but they never shut God out. The powers of darkness may besiege on every side, but the mountains are always full of the horses and chariots of God. This woman of Sychar might have gone home denying that the Messiah had been near her. Though she had seen in him only a travel-stained and thirsty Jew, still would it have been true that Jesus, the Redeemer of her soul, had been by her side. Though we deny his nearness, it is as true that the Redeemer of our souls is at our side. Climb with glad feet the hill of sacrifice; there will be burning bushes on the way. Let clouds lower; they are but the dust of His feet. The voice you hear along the way is the voice of God.

We learn here Christ's method of revealing himself. He reveals himself to us along the line of our common duties and experiences. Only one man was asked to go up into Mount Sinai and only three into the Mount of Transfiguration. Whether Israelites following Moses or disciples following Jesus, for the most part men have been taught of God along the line of their common thoughts and occupations. As this tired, sinful woman comes to the well, thirsty, thinking of the water she has come to draw, Jesus uses a cup of this water to mirror the glories of heaven. He uses the need and duty of the moment to lead up to the apprehension of the supreme need and duty of life. He uses the familiar thing of which she is thinking to unfold to her the unfamiliar things of which she has never thought. After the feeding of the multitude, while their minds are full of the miracle they have just witnessed, he rises, perhaps with fragments of bread in his hand, and, following their line of thought, reveals himself as the Bread of Life. With a little group he watches the shepherd secure the sheep. When the flock is safely housed, the gate barred, while all are thinking of

the shepherd's care and the sheltered sheep, he tells them he is the Good Shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep, and the door by which men enter into salvation. The most beautiful of his parables, the clearest revelations of his nature and mission hinge on some thought or occupation or scene common in human life. So to wandering Abraham sitting in his tent door in the heat of the day, God appeared in the traveling angels who unfolded to the patriarch his place in the kingdom of God. To pugilistic Jacob dreaming of personal advancement he appeared as a wrestling angel. To soldierly Joshua, as a full-armed warrior. To women weeping at the sepulcher, as a messenger of comfort. Wesley, Shaftesbury, Livingstone, Neesima, with multitudes in our own day, have received their far-reaching revelations of God and duty, not on mounts apart from life and wrapped in strange celestial glory, but as they toiled among the soul-sick, the lost and hopeless at the mountain's foot. God speaks to us as we do the duty of the hour. We meet him in the pathway of daily living along which he walks with us and unfolds all things concerning himself. The hewing of wood and the drawing of water are the gateways of heavenly knowledge. By Jacob's well to a common woman at her daily toil he gave one of the most beautiful and profound revelations of his nature and mission ever granted a human soul. Moses learned far more of God on the desert march with its wearying monotony than on Sinai amid the awful glories of rumbling thunder and flashing lightning. We too will learn little in special vision, but most on the daily march. Wedding bells and funeral knells, hopes fulfilled and hopes deferred, rest and toil, victory and defeat, and all our varied experiences are God's interpreters, leading us by way of the seen and temporal to the knowledge of the unseen and eternal.

This chapter gives us, also, light on the nature of Jesus.

The aim of John's Gospel is to unfold the nature of Christ. Nowhere does he more perfectly do this than in the conversation with the Samaritan. "Living water!" Commentators are sometimes guides only to barren pastures and empty cisterns. Their varied explanations of these two words are, however, universally helpful. One says they signify faith in God; others, Jesus himself, the Holy Spirit, the evangelical doctrine, the truth, the word of salvation, peace of heart, eternal life. The Scriptural use of the word water hints at the fullness of its meaning here; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground" — the measureless abundance of the gift of the Holy Spirit. "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters" — God the source of spiritual life. "All the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim" — plenteous life and blessing. "There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" — the cleansing from sin; or life-giving power, of which Ezekiel gives sublime symbols in his vision of holy waters flowing from under the threshold of the house of God; or boundless salvation, which John saw in the river of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In "living water," then, Christ gathers into one symbol, more suggestive, the richest imagery in which prophecy has pictured the fullness of divine mercy and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has gathered up the most beautiful of the Old Testament promises and given them back in one more beautiful than all, to this degraded woman of a despised race. He fastens together the symbols of God's mercy that shine on the page of prophecy like jewels cut in heaven and, placing them on his brow in one dazzling crown, bids this Samaritan sinner look on him as the incarnation of Life

and Truth. He proclaims himself the realization of all prophetic visions, the sufficient Saviour, the giver of life and peace to every thirsty, dying soul. This is no empty boast. Jesus is literally the living water of which we may drink and never thirst. To hundreds in his brief earthly life he made good his words at Sychar's well. The turning of water to wine was a sign on the threshold of his ministry of future more wonderful transformations of lean and wretched souls to strong and blessed sons of God. At morning, noon, and night, in country and city, in the home or the street, people flocked to him with their burdens of sin and sickness and sorrow, to find him able to take them all upon himself and prove himself living water to their souls. "Christ in history is undoubtedly more marvelous than Christ in Galilee." Legend tells us that when a certain god was tested he was given a drinking horn to drain dry; but though he drank and drank, he could not exhaust it, for it was connected with the sea. The marvel of all time is the ability of Christ to meet and sustain the supreme tests of the soul. For two thousand years thirsty humanity has pressed its parched lips against Christ, but not to exhaust him. He is connected with the infinite sea of divine being. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Men of every lineage and every language, men from the glittering summits of culture and the depths of ignorance, from the palace and the hovel, from paths of virtue and pits of vice, have flocked to him and been satisfied and saved. The glory of the first Pentecost when Christ became living water to five thousand souls eclipsed the splendor of the three years of his earthly ministry, and it, in turn, has been overshadowed by later Pentecosts which have brought cities, states, empires to the feet of Jesus. Our modern life finds no substitute for Jesus Christ. Its gods have feet of clay. There is no disputing voice as, pointing with

pierced hand to the broken cisterns of the world, he cries: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." History, the history of nations and of individuals, is witness to this claim. Young man with wine cup in hand, you drink to thirst again, and your thirst will be to your soul as the serpent's bite and the adder's sting. Pluck the red flowers of passion, but know they hold thorns that will pierce your heart. Struggle for gold, but forget not every dollar won means hunger for another until your dollars become fetters to bind your soul in captivity to hell. Put your lips to Christ's cup of life. To you the greatest of the prophets speaks: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; . . . Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." To you the greatest of the apostles speaks: "Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." To you the greatest of the evangelists speaks: "He that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." To you the deepest of human experiences speaks:—

> I heard the voice of Jesus say,
> "Behold, I freely give
> The living water; thirsty one,
> Stoop down, and drink, and live."
> I came to Jesus, and I drank
> Of that life-giving stream;
> My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
> And now I live in him.

Dash down the cup of dregs. Take up the cup of life.

Let this chapter also tell us that Christ gives far more than we ask. This woman, at best, with dim spiritual

apprehension, said: "Give me this water." He gave beyond her largest hopes. He gave her her Saviour and herself, he gave her truth to illumine her own soul and truth to give to others. He opened to her two doors — the door of mercy and the door of a mission. God's answers are always larger than our prayers. We ask for a taste; he gives an overflowing cup. We beg for crumbs; he gives loaves. There are baskets full of fragments left over from every feast God spreads for us. We ask for living water; he becomes in us a well of water springing up unto eternal life. We ask for mercy; he gives us a mission. Service is better than safety, for safety is in service.

John E. Tuttle.

DANIEL'S ABSTINENCE.

DANIEL 1: 8–20.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat."

THE learning of the world is not always associated with the highest types of moral character. Yet these excellences are so often married in the scripture that it is apparent that they were intended to belong to one family. It is only when perverted by pride or personal ambition that the thoughts of master minds are arrayed against Christ. Abraham kept his heart simple along with great wisdom and wealth. Moses was humble with his dictatorial powers as a leader of men. Daniel, with scholarly gifts which made him the prime minister of kings, never forgot his childhood custom of prayer. We have to consider, as the outline of this character and lesson: —

I. *The Puritan scholar.*

Daniel was old enough to have well-disciplined mental powers and a mature personality, as his confessed principles and conversation with the prince of the eunuchs show. He was a youth with established habits. On the other hand he was not too old for arduous and continued application for a space of three years. Probably he and his comrades were about of that age at which our young men enter college. Seldom do elder persons succeed in carrying through a prolonged course of study. The king would also select youth for the sake of their appearance, as well as for their possibilities of scholarship. Physical as well as intellectual gifts were striking in the case of these chosen lads. It would seem as though when tempta-

tion was presented to Daniel he had a kind of armor-plate preparation for just such an emergency. He may have heard how other boys had conducted themselves in the court of Babylon, and he felt that he had the honor of his nation and of his God to defend before the heathen. He was thoughtful enough to have considered the careers of the fast set in Jerusalem, and to have noted the causes which led to the downfall of his native city, as well as the endings of dissolute lives. A young man who goes away to school in our day needs some such resolutions as this Hebrew had, seamed into his heart, as well as money sewn into his belt. To project healthy home habits into the circle of modern collegiate life requires as much stored up conviction as a mortar does ammunition to bombard a fortress. There was no conspicuous airing of Daniel's religious sentiments, but he held them firmly from the start amid changed surroundings. The new arrival at the king's university made a courteous request to the keeper of the royal pantry for some simpler fare than wine and game. He would prefer porridge and water. This pensioned and charity scholar was not on a very satisfactory footing to ask for a change in the social customs of a palace or academy, but he was not deterred thereby from a brave protest. It established a precedent which others less courageous followed. It was a considerable step in the progress of temperance reform when steamers, instead of including liquors in the cost of the fare, allowed those who wanted these luxuries to pay for them as extras, and lessened the cost for the passengers accordingly. Daniel inaugurated this modification in dining usages, that if a man wished for wines he must order them on his own account. There is room for the service of a good many young men of this better type in our colleges and clubs. Let the lad with his foul imagination take his unclean pictures to his own den, but see that the clean-minded

do not have to come in contact with them in your society rooms. Some one must speak out about this matter, friend, and though the evil has gone on for years, let it be your part to remove it. Old graduates and even ministers go back to these halls at reunions and commencements and the same poisonous prints are allowed to hang there year after year without a manly rebuke, which would usually be effective. This ancient prize scholar helped to separate the dangerous from the wholesome things of life. He blacklisted certain articles of diet. The innocent youth was not henceforth compelled to take the social glass for the sake of courtesy because it was paid for, provided, or expected to be drunk. When he, later in life, opened his window toward Jerusalem three times a day to pray, there were no tainting portraits or symbols of pleasure which impaired the energy of the simple faith of this Puritan. God could look into the room of this scholar. It was clean as the youthful heart and imagination of the student. There is the same opportunity for reform in many lodges that there is in the clubs and colleges. If the past-masters, stewards, or alumni do not move in these matters, do you, my lad with a keen-edged conscience and a record still to make, cleave the idols about you. The heroes of youth are the great performers, but the best achievements of early days are in self-denial. "For he that herein serveth Christ is well pleasing to God and approved of men" (Rom. 14:18).

A man's convivial habits will classify him more rigidly than the class room. The use of wine on the part of boys in school or trade will mark them unfavorably in the regard of elders who are themselves accustomed to it. The question of a promotion to a place of trust will often turn upon your conduct outside of regular business hours. Careless talk among companions tells more than you are aware of, and counts with customers and employers as

well as skill in selling goods. How a clerk spends his nights is often more significant for his success than the labor of the day. It was champagne breakfasts on the train between New York and Boston which made bankers suspicious of one of their number, and led them to anticipate the crash which came. Social habits are a better basis for prophecy than scholarship. The traditions of our Puritan churches have associated high learning with simple customs and sound character, and the youth of our day have a noble as well as difficult task to keep the future citizens of the republic in this worthy line of descent.

II. *The quartet of patriots.*

Three others besides Daniel had been selected by the king's commissioner to represent the Jewish race at the royal academy of Babylon. When the question of departing from the manner of life of their early training came up, though Daniel was spokesman, they all united in the protest. They consulted and prayed together and resolved to hold out against the new régime of luxury. How many less worthy occasions have united our collegians in the history of our American educational institutions! A larger number of revolts have occurred against plain fare than because there was too much of a good thing. Students ally themselves for social improvements, for mischief, to champion some scapegrace comrade, but the moral reform club has not had a prominent place in the annals of our schools of learning. One of the last public addresses of the late Bishop Brooks was at an alumni dinner, when he spoke of the belated beginnings of earnest purpose in our students. The single leader, however brave, needs to associate others with himself for sympathy as well as for effective work. It is a frequent experience that a young man coming to college with good principles relaxes his efforts in righteousness before he has had time

to discover the others likeminded, who would gladly have come to his assistance on better acquaintance.

The example of these four Jews standing together for the honor of their nation and their God is an illustration of pious patriotism for the present generation. It is also suggestive of the proper method of reform movements. These young men agreed on something and held to it. They did not have several plans to propose, but they accepted a single issue. Part of them may have been in favor of some modifications of their regular childhood diet, but when it came to make a test they stood as one man. They did not confuse the steward with several views, but they voted "No License" from their ward. They were wise in their dealing with their masters. The responsibility for their plans was not entirely shouldered on him. All they asked for was a fair trial of their system. It is a fine trait in men not to seek to compel others to share the burden of their failures. Many are like this steward in their temperance views. They are well disposed towards a good cause, but do not see how it can be successful. There is need of enlightenment. The boys finally through their kindly treatment got the consent of their keeper to their total abstinence experiment. If at the end of ten days the scheme of putting his wards on plain food did not work, there was time to undo the damage. The college professors or the politicians may not be enthusiastic in support of your proposals, but our young men could do a great deal towards getting reforms a hearing and opportunity in colleges and cities and in the country as a whole.

For a time your own conduct may be the most effective agent in the change of public sentiment. Many other persons may have followed this example of the young captives when their consistent stand and success became known. Mohammed at Mecca condemned the use of

wine to his followers. Possibly the influence of that temperance band in Babylon may have survived and crossed the desert, to propagate itself anew in the creed of the Koran. These young men were princes. They gave their finest culture and character to maintaining the cause of their nation and their faith in a foreign land. This is a part of patriotism whether in Boston or the Latin Quarter of Paris. The representatives of the best families and society of Jerusalem kept up their traditions of piety abroad. The following words of Sir John Malcolm when entering Persia with his suite were illustrated in the neighboring kingdom of Babylon long ago: "In the absence of books the Persians will peruse us and from what they see and hear form their opinion of our country. Let us take care therefore that nothing is found in the page but what is found in England, and believe me that with such a people more depends upon personal impressions than upon treaties." The scholar as a patriot needs to be considered as well as the student in politics. The editors of newspapers could contemplate this theme when tempted to pander to depraved tastes of readers. The names of four Jewish pupils were on the bulletins of arrivals of a late caravan, but they never got on the police register of Babylon.

III. *The ordeal for promotion.*

At the end of ten days' trial the good effects of the plain diet were already seen in the face, form, and mental qualities of the Hebrew section. The pace set in the beginning of youthful self-denial was the proportion of progress kept up until the end. Every one of those days of experiment the lads doubled on their competitors. The commencement examinations before the king showed that the captives were ten times better than their rivals. Each day of faithful preliminary test made its mark in after years. A young person's faith on the threshold of

life takes hold of the divine heart and brings eternal honors. Lord Alderson said that when he entered Cambridge University he was so sure of his standing that he would have refused the second place in his class if that had been guaranteed to him on the start. There are spiritual experiences in the lives of youths which often give them an assurance of success beyond the prophecy of friends. Daniel and his pious triumvirate were willing to risk something on their pledge of divine favor.

There would be great excitement over such a contest as this in that heathen capital. As the score showed the Hebrews ahead on each subject, there would be murmurs of discontent and vengeance among the friends and instructors of the other scholars. Buddhists and Brahmins, the priests of Isis, enchanters and soothsayers would be there to witness the performance of favorite pupils. It was really an international tournament. Babylon was a cosmopolitan capital. This little praying band of Puritans were really pitted against the world. Nobody cheered or threw bouquets of roses at this graduation, when an award was made to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There was no chance for cheating and a suspicion would be punished with death. So the crowd would receive the announcement of the Hebrews' "double firsts" in sullen silence. It was a state occasion when the king visited his court college, as it is when the Czar goes to examine his military cadets.

The monarch appears to have taken precautions to have a fair examination and prevent himself being imposed on much as lately did his Majesty of Korea. In the case of an eighteen-year-old son of the prime minister the officials were determided that one in such a high station should not fail. The boy had good parts, but after the novelty of his new tasks wore off, he neglected his English studies. "Special examination books had been prepared and each

scholar had been given his page and told to prepare it. It was expected that thus the scholars would go through swimmingly. One thing they had overlooked, however, and that was that the king might submit the examination to the teacher's judgment. In fact this was what happened, as his majesty asked the teacher how each scholar had done, so that we were able to give to each the grade his work had earned. The son of the prime minister, learning what was going on, sent first the scholars, and afterward one of the board of education, to plead with us to allow him to take a high grade, on the plea that his father was a prime minister. Our reply was that his father's position made no difference in the matter at issue, and every mistake he made would be counted against him. The consequence was that the young man went into the very lowest division and lost much prestige. Yet it was the purpose of the school official to have him pass as a fine scholar in English, and so gain an advance in official position." Methods of giving promotion were probably much the same in olden times in Oriental countries as at present, and after the sample given above.

It was a more humane test to which these Hebrew boys were submitted than that of the early Christians. The rivalry of science was better than that with beasts and gladiators. But the fierce passion of competitors only slumbered ready to burst forth later at the mouth of the fiery furnace and the lion's den. Though the conflict was renewed in different forms, success remained with the captives. Belteshazzar as prime minister during successive reigns was the Daniel of the university. The noblest history of great empires has centered round the imprisoned youth of Judæa. Joseph and Moses in Egypt; Daniel and his comrades in Babylon; Esther in Shushan; Jesus in the realm of the Cæsars; Paul in Rome, have given the luster of their names and deeds to capitals whose roll of

conquests fades while the fame of their exiles grows more luminous. John Wycliffe was as much to English liberty as a patriot as he was to the church as a Christian reformer. Napoleon had as one of the few faithful followers who remained with him though his campaigns and at Elba, General Drouot. He was a Bible-reading Protestant and commander of the artillery which protected the royal guard. In the retreat from Russia at Hainau and Leipsic it was to this man that he committed his desperate commission and cool death plunges. The Russians never had a general who could take the field and beat an enemy with equal numbers save psalm-singing, praying Suvaroff. Lawrence and Havelock added the realm of India to the crown of Victoria. The supporters of thrones and states, empires and republics will yet be such men as the praying scholars, the patriotic foreigners, the God-fearing sons of strangers in our high places.

William R. Campbell.

FOURTH QUARTER.

JESUS AT NAZARETH.

LUKE 4: 16–30.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up:" etc.

How did Jesus read the Bible? What were his favorite texts? Which books were most familiar to him? Did the poor boy of Nazareth own a collection of manuscript rolls? What language did he speak? Besides his vernacular Aramaic, did he speak Greek? Did he learn the dead language, Hebrew, in order to enjoy in the original the sacred classics?

All these are questions which the devout student of the life of the Christ is apt to ask. None of them can be answered to our fullest satisfaction. Nevertheless in the lesson for to-day there is much light and material for opinion. That Jesus was regular in his attendance in the place where prayer was wont to be made, the opening verse declares. Coming from Capernaum, where he had wrought miracles, possibly also fresh from the well at Sychar and the town in which he had been welcomed by Samaritans, he reëntered his boyhood's home. On the Sabbath day in the synagogue, the prayers being over, the *chazzan*, or minister, according to custom, brought out the rolls for public reading by various persons from the law and the prophets. Probably as the seventh or last reader the man Jesus, son of Joseph the carpenter and of Mary, was invited to read and also to comment, explain, or preach. In this instance the skin roll containing the

writings of Isaiah was handed to him. Jesus unfolded and spread out the manuscript, probably in such manner as to catch with his eye various parts of the writing which, over a millennium after his day on earth, has since been divided into chapters and verses. He found the passage which begins our sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, adding a line from the fifty-eighth chapter. Very probably he read first in the Hebrew and then translated it to the people in their local, everyday speech, the Aramaic. Not careful about the modern notions of verbal exactness, Luke, the reporter of his words, gives their form with even one or two variations as they are found in "the people's Bible" of that day, the Septuagint.

More significant even than the passage which Jesus read was the one which he omitted to read. What he purposely failed to say was as much as what he said. His silence was divinely eloquent and is of vital meaning to us, his followers. It will reward us richly to study what Jesus omitted to read, and to know why he omitted it.

What were the favorite texts and books of Jesus? Certainly not the imprecatory psalms, the ritualistic or priestly codes in the Pentateuch, the pages of the Old Testament that breathe threatenings and slaughter upon the Gentiles, whom later translators called *heath men*, or heathen, not the so-called Solomonic literature, not even the texts that have been so overworked in mediæval and modern controversies. Even when Jesus quoted or referred to questions of the law, incidents in the Hexateuch or historical books, in Jonah or in Daniel, he usually interpreted them in a manner different from that of the rabbis, Pharisees, or haters of non-Jewish mankind. The book which we call Deuteronomy (though he did not so call it), the Psalms, and Isaiah were oftenest quoted by him, and seem to have been his especial favorites.

We turn to the book of the Servant of Jehovah, and

hear how the prophet speaks of himself. We italicize the line which Jesus startled his hearers by omitting. Jesus was, in the best and only the best sense of the term, a sensational preacher, an innovator of the right sort just when innovation and reform were vitally necessary.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, *and the day of vengeance of our God.*"

Significant this omission: "And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down."

Jesus had already announced his divine mission, his Messiahship at Sychar. This was not in the way of men, with theatrical effect or impressive splendor. It was to a woman, a Samaritan at a well curb. He had proclaimed salvation to Samaritans. Instead of the day of vengeance to some, he had preached the acceptable year of the Lord to all. Omitting what the haters of their fellowmen emphasized, Jesus laid stress on what the formalists would fain forget. As he here called to their mind the all-including mercy of God as incarnated and signally displayed in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha to foreigners, so later he rightly explained the sign of the prophet Jonah. He showed how even Ninevites who repented were saved. He thus illuminated for all time the meaning of that greatest missionary book in the Old Testament.

The cry of the Jew was for the divine judgment upon the heathen, the expulsion or annihilation of their Roman conquerors, the reaffirmation of vengeance on Samaritans, Phœnicians, and all the non-elect nations. They had forgotten their calling as lights, as missionaries to the Gentiles, and longed to be instruments of vengeance.

Yet even in reading the prophets, as in perusing the primal commandment, they had forgotten the divine proportion. The inspired writer of the decalogue tells us that Jehovah visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third or fourth generation of them that hate him, but shows mercy unto thousands of generations of those who keep his commandments. So, while with the proclamation of the acceptable *year* of the Lord, there is indeed a *day* of vengeance, there is yet abundance of grace between the months of a whole year, while vengeance is but a day. Mercy is long, retribution is short. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

One cannot read the Gospels without soon finding how Jesus interpreted the great prophets, and the grand history of the providential dealings with a people whom God educated to be missionaries. They had forgotten their calling. Jesus, out of their own Scriptures, taught them aright. Early in his ministry he revealed the world-wide fullness of his mission. Not until his resurrection and final words before his ascension did he wait to teach universal grace and charity or to give the commission of world-wide preaching of the gospel and discipleship. Even before Paul's time, had the twelve been more spiritually minded, more penetrative of their Master's meaning, the purpose of universal evangelization in Christ, as well as of the will of God to save all who repent, would have been clear to them. Within the temple courts the middle wall of partition then actually existed in stone. With its inscriptions menacing death, it made a line not only of division but of murderous hatred to the alien. Yet this was easy to break down. Compared with the mental pre-

judices, distorted views, and unspiritual hatred of humanity in general, which had built a Jericho wall of bigotry, the stones of the middle wall of partition were as trifles. Nevertheless Jesus is the true Joshua who is to lay the wall flat. In the synagogue at Nazareth he who had begun at Sychar continues his leveling assaults. Final peace, the making of both Jew and Gentile one, was to come only through the reconciling blood of the cross.

Time for his life to be poured out for transgressors and misinterpreters of the prophets was not yet. He was still to teach and leave behind him words of life. His reading over, "the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them," in comment upon the prophetic words, "To-day hath *this scripture* been fulfilled in your ears."

Yes; the Scripture as he read it, as he interpreted it, was that day fulfilled. It is fulfilling now and for aye. In spite of men killing each other in the name of God, hating each other for the cause of religion, so called, torturing in prison cells and murdering by inquisitorial fires on behalf of "the truth," banishing and exiling for "purity of doctrine's sake," the mission of the Christian and of the Church is not to preach the day of vengeance or to execute wrath upon dissenters or heathen. Rather is it to announce and make visible good news of God to the poor; to visit the prisoner, to proclaim release to the captives, whether in the chains of ignorance, superstition, darkness, or undeveloped life; to open the eyes and to rend the veil from the filmed eyes who know not the love of the heavenly Father; to proclaim the long bright day of acceptance with God, and to emphasize the mercy extended "to-day." *Now* is the accepted time, the acceptable year. "*To-day* hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

Even then, "all bare him witness, and wondered at the

words of grace that proceeded out of his month." Yet did they not believe. They loved their own narrow prejudices and hardened hearts and blinded eyes more than light, liberty, healing of the mind. Their own mouths rejected the fulfillment of the word of prophecy and the offered salvation. With the spirit of the dog in the manger they refused alike to honor Jesus and to recognize that God was the Father of the Gentiles also. The fierce spirit of Ezra's time, which even made cruel divorces legal, and exalted the tithed mint, anise, and cummin of priestly requirements above the weightier matters of eternal right, was here ready to blaze out again. Against this sacerdotal tyranny, against this Jew-bigotry that made Jerusalemites put away the wives of love and youth, Malachi had in the name of Jehovah protested. To offset it with a higher truth had the glowing books of Ruth and Jonah been written. In harmony with the inspired authors of these books and with the true spirit of prophecy, Jesus testified. Noticing only to pass by the petty thoughts and carping criticisms in their minds, he refuses to work miracles in Nazareth as at Cana or Capernaum, or to minister to their narrow prejudices. Willing to remain unhonored in his own village, he illuminates again the biblical story and tells how Elijah turned aside in a foreign land to bless an alien. As Boaz knew nothing of the later exclusiveness of the post-exilic Jews when he married a Moabitess, so Elijah, prophet of God, so this descendant of Ruth, the Messiah Jesus, knew not Samaritan, Syro-Phœnician, publican, Pharisee, Greek, or Jew, but only sinners, penitents, sons of God. As in Jonah's day, the Father, after whom every fatherhood is named, knew not Ninevites or Israelites, not sons of the curse or elect sons of Abraham, but only the repentant, so Elisha discriminated not against the Syrian Naaman.

In a word, Jesus is here proclaiming in the most

unmistakable manner the universality of divine grace. Here, while still on the threshold of his ministry, he sets forth in Galilee what he had preached in Samaria. Here in Nazareth he showed the utter worthlessness of forms, hereditary privilege, birthrights so called, in religion. No man can redeem his own soul or give to God a ransom for his brother because of his claim to being "a son of Abraham," or a professed member of "the true church," or because he fasts twice a week, gives tithes of all he possesses, or is not as a heathen, publican, heretic, or dissenter.

Two lessons we read for all time :—

I. True prophecy is not prediction. It is not the detailed foretelling of things hidden in futurity or from the eyes of all but the seer. The Latin and Romish notion is not the biblical idea. Prophecy is the utterance of Jehovah's word, the expression of truth revealed to the servant of God. The prophet is one who makes clear the Father's will. Between prophet and priest there may be harmony, never symphony. The work of the priest tends to make religion a cultus, a system, a museum of fossils. The work of the prophet is to keep religion a life, a vital growth, a development into the fullness ordained of God. The priest rests upon a fact, a thing done and dead. The prophet rests upon the truth which was and is and is to come. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. With all the line of truth-speakers Jesus agrees. He reproclaimed Isaiah, he represented the divine instruction initiated by Moses, he made the old changeless, true religion new and fresh, he broke the crusts and fences in order to continue its life into the ages and through all the earth. He fulfilled by his teachings as a prophet, and especially by his own life, all the teachings of the bearers of truth from Moses to Malachi, even as by his sacrificial death on the cross he

emptied of all meaning and further necessity of existence the altar sacrifices and priestly codes. As he fulfilled the prophecy which he that day read in the Nazareth synagogue, so are all the sweet promises and predictions fulfilled whenever the Church and Christians fully imitate their Lord in preaching light, release, uplift, and salvation in his name.

II. True preaching of the gospel, true Christ life means the constant breaking of the old shells, pods, husks, and crusts of religion and the perpetual release of the heavenly seed. The age in which we live is one of glory and hope. The Nazareth reproclamation of Isaiah's prophecy is in process of fulfillment. How grandly are walls of pagan prejudice tumbling! How invitingly the harvest fields whiten on lands once walled up to heaven! How the old scholastic, mediæval, Roman walls of partition in dogma, creed, anathema are falling flat. Surely, safely, the simplification of theology is going on. Biblical theology is everywhere displacing the systems of men. Sound and reverent criticism is brushing away Jewish fables. The literary and original forms of the Old Testament writings are being recovered. The same enlightened judgment and methods which sloughed off from the Bible the Apocrypha, and the parasitic writings of the Gnostics, Docetics, and other sectarians of the early Christian centuries, are restoring the loveliness, simplicity, and beauty of the prophets and inspired historians, and showing us the simple grandeur and saving power of the Bible. The priests and the monopolists of religion tremble at this, but the true followers of Jesus rejoice at having Christianity made so simple that it can be understood without even a professional interpreter. Even the race-hatreds masquerading under the name of orthodoxy, the Satanic pride of civilization, which steals lands and enslaves nations by appealing to heaven, must

give way before the gospel. In the way of Jewish bigotry, slavery, cannibalism, piracy, crusades, and all injustice must go the wicked pride, whether called Catholic, Protestant, Puritan, Christian, and all that is anti-Christ in method or spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Hard as it may be for "the church" or the Christian, so alleged and called, they who are Christ's must in all things bear his yoke and learn of him.

William Elliot Griffis.

THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

LUKE 5: 1–11.

"Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon him."

PICTORIAL language is the universal one. Hieroglyphic alphabets are more readily learned than Roman characters. The child gets the idea of a dog from the drawing, long before he knows the letters which represent the same thing. Abstract words and sentences inform only those who have had careful training. He who would attract and hold the multitudes must move in the range of their thought and use their speech. The better disciplined are not unresponsive to the simplest forms of illustrations. Greek philosopher and Palestinian story-teller alike were won by the naturalness and picturesqueness of the Christ's utterances. He came for them both, while it was notably true that "without a parable spake he not," and so was in agreement with the best Oriental teachers. Yet it was also plain that he made, as they did not, his *works* to show his deeper and more important meanings. The profound duties and relations which men had toward God were being constantly made to appear by his "mighty deeds." A series of object lessons was given to the astonished disciples and to the curious crowds, the intent of which they could not miss. We are called to look on this one, told so well in the passage before us, and to act according to its instructions. This is not the place to consider the difficulties which a careful student finds in reconciling the account of this scene given by the different Evangelists, or to refute the claims of some,

that St. Luke has here "confused two events in pursuit of a symbolic meaning."

The divergencies are fairly explainable. It is in point to note: —

I. *Christ's unconventionality.*

To do things as long usage has decreed they should be done becomes an unconscious habit. We are in the realm of law. Cause and effect are everywhere apparent. The wise man acts in harmony with what he has observed to be established. He does not wish to meet constant defeat. Many customs have gained almost the authority of a sacred edict. One who ignores or departs from them is looked on as, in a sense, infidel. Styles of dress, social manners, the unwritten rules of good breeding, are not disregarded without severe censure from the many. Religious rites and ceremonials having, as is often claimed, the seal of the Holy Spirit, are not violated without expectation that the offender will suffer therefor. The open unbeliever used to be a much more dreadful figure than he is now. Yet every variation from long-accepted forms has at first been sharply challenged, though finally getting recognition as perhaps having equal right to be respected. Denominational peculiarities have had such history. No matter how accurate and broad the scholarship, how sincere the conviction, how devoted and self-denying the life of the teacher, the whole weight of previous tradition and practice is enlisted to keep him within the ancient lines. The Roman Church mightily exercises itself to that end; but so did the Jewish, and so does any branch of the Protestant Church. And he is most culpable who, through mere uneasiness or love of notoriety, breaks with the prevailing system, which has brought comfort and peace and help to multitudes.

Our Lord seemed to many, in his day, to be doing that very thing. He was indifferent to and condemned every

canon of men which had gradually been elevated into a holy requirement. When it shielded any in their sin and obscured the dazzling clearness of the Word of God, he was constantly shocking those who had put the one in place of the other. It was as if the deep-cut letters in the stone had been filled with plaster which had also been spread over the whole surface of that majestic code, and mortals had scratched on that instead commands agreeable to themselves. The Reformer was counted the criminal when he would bring all back to the original demands. Yet no one the world had ever seen so strictly and singly heeded the divine statutes. He offered sacrifices and prayers in his Father's house. He expounded the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets in their appointed place. He honored the high office of the priesthood. He wonderfully impressed every listener with a sense of the presence, knowledge, power, wisdom, and love of Jehovah. Filled with the fullness of God, he saw everywhere and in every situation a chance to bring these supreme truths to the attention of men. He embraced every occasion and every occurrence to enforce what they knew or should know so well, that they should seek first — before any national or civil or personal end — his kingdom. Always ready, it did not matter where he spoke when his mission was so pressing. In the temple court or synagogue, in the market-place or at the house of ruler or publican, on the slopes beyond the town or on the beach of the lake, or in the retreat of the country road, anywhere he found a rostrum. The Grecian Sophists' manner of discourse, as they walked in grove or quiet gardens with their pupils, had been doubtless introduced into Palestine. It was not therefore singular as Jesus adopted it. A fishing boat was as broad and steady a platform as he needed, from which to tell sinners of the grace of God and call them to repentance. The peasant's

garb was stately robe enough to clothe the minister of such word. The early morning was proper hour enough to publish the good tidings to needy souls. It could hardly be, then, that all who had associated religion with certain places and offices and hours and phrases and rituals should not have been much disturbed at his free and informal ways. Their hearts gave uniform "amens" to his words, but their lips could not.

Men weary of constant surprises. They long for the settled and fixed. They rest in uniformity and are impatient of exceptions. Even the natural, when it breaks into the order of the artificial, is offensive. Jesus Christ was a never-failing exhibition of the normal and right desires and actions which should characterize all. He showed us what the primitive life was before sin changed it. Not readily do any enter into the pristine liberty of the children of God. The air of Eden, though we think we long for it, seems too rarified. We have grown used to hard breathing and heavy burdens. The whip and the goad and the dull routine seem essential to our best action. While, in the light Christ sheds upon life, stimulating visions of wide, original, and individual service are had, yet, against these, the usual, expected, and hitherto successful fashions are arrayed. Many are still prone to think only of "Jerusalem or this mountain" as the spot for the Lord's altar; of the anointed priest as the only rightful minister; of the regular lesson as alone proper to be followed in social worship. More tenaciously than we are aware, training and habit hold us back from our best effort and largest privilege. We cling to our fetters and know them not as such. Yet we do not cease admiring their freedom who, like their Master, know only the will of him that sent them and who delight to do it revealing itself in ever new and varied particulars. He who never gave the world two sunsets exactly alike in

outline, color, and glory, never is tasked to find fresh and delightful methods for our exercise. He who never allows the sun to fail in its going down never permits any child of his to escape the pressing sense of duty. The law of liberty is but the liberty of law. In Christ are seen both these.

II. *Christ's pleasure in surprising his friends.*

"Luck" is a favorite word with fishermen as with gamblers. Some such, doubtless, was on the lips of those tired Galileans, as they drew to shore, after a fruitless night's toil on the lake. Their prey had been wary and escaped the fatal net. The boats, like their owners, might rest till another nightfall. That was a good use to which to put one, as a pulpit for the famous Rabbi. The sermon to the eager throng over, the imperial word was given to the practised fishermen to try again for a haul. It would have seemed to be the instruction of the novice to the expert. They who must live by their trade get skillful in it. Useless as the venture would be in the bright daylight, yet the loyal men would make it if the Master so said. Faithlessness raised the sail or pulled the oar on that little craft, as she moved out over the waters. Faithlessness cast the nets again into the depths. There was no ruffling of the surface by a school of the finny tribe, which (the commentators think) the quick eye of the Christ descried, and so directed the steersman where to enclose them. Peter was simply and mechanically heeding the order. He was going out, not to any kind of success, but to complete failure. Still, if it pleased the teacher, he would comply with the wish — that, and nothing more.

But as they hauled, lo! a marvelous flapping within the meshes, and a catch such as they had not seen for many a day was theirs. Out of the waters, so sterile a few hours since, came a wealth of food they had hardly

room for. It was not a "happy hit," a "lucky venture." Those rude men beheld there before them not a *miracle*, but instead they looked on the well-informed Person to whom nothing was strange on sea or land. This was he on whom the tiniest life and the grandest alike depended. At his will they came and went. That untraceable economy by which each creature in some way is linked with or ministers to another's good had here its example. It was the All-Wise providing for his own. The vain and disappointing toil of the night was only to emphasize the generous supply of the day. Out of defeat had come, through him, success. And that was surprise. They had not organized their great fortune. They had only silently prophesied against it.

In like manner we go on relying upon our judgments, reciting our experiences, multiplying our reasons why it is useless to attempt as the Lord bids. We calculate the chances and make our observations and limit our own opportunities, and mourn over our weaknesses and poverty while he may be saying, "Launch out and let down your nets." We reply, we have thoroughly dragged those waters and there is naught there. There is but one course for the dutiful to take. It is to obey. No one yet has measured all the consequences which are involved in that act. It may mean continued barrenness or abundance. In either case the issue astonishes. Oftenest the doubting but obedient soul finds its loss changed into conspicuous gain. To see life rising out of death, blessings out of adversity, joy out of sorrow, that seems to be God's way of gaining unfaltering trust. We speak much of the necessity of faith and of its beneficent results. But it waits on doing simply because Christ commands. And the glad surprises he longs to give us are reserved only for those who have *attempted* in his name. The poverty of his saints unrelieved — the disaster or persecu-

tion which overtakes his messengers — the denials and closed doors to those who seek only to build largely for him — these would seem to refute our doctrine, but we prejudge them each. For any disciple to declare his effort a failure, before they had reached the place to which he was directed, would have been as proper as for any now to stop before the ground of vantage is gained. We are in greatest hurry to lay hands on the best things. We find it hard to "wait on the Lord;" to "be strong" and let our hearts "take courage." The most entrancing splendors of the sky need the heaviest clouds whose broken masses they may set aflame with color. Yet it seems often as if the thick and leaden canopy of the heavens would never again be pierced with cheerful rays. God is behind them. His glory is yet to shine forth.

III. *Christ would not terrify but encourage his friends.* The distance between the creature and the Creator is so vast, it is not strange a sudden revelation of his presence and power should appall any. Sin could not dare its least exercise were we conscious of his nearness. Man can but tremble, standing helpless before him who knows his heart and power and life. Yet to bridge the chasm between the Infinite and the finite, Christ came. To inspire with trust rather than alarm he entered into our human form. To save and not to judge he was manifested. But at every turn of his hand, which never ceased its gracious ministries, they were startled and exclaimed, "whence hath this man . . . these mighty works?" Death seemed near to them, so closely did they associate it with the Author of life. We, in imagination, arm him with the scythe rather than the horn of plenty or the invincible shield. That, however, was not the impression Christ sought to make. As with the frightened shepherds, so again with the awe-struck Peter, the assuring words, "Fear not," restored self-possession

and begat confidence. Here was their almighty friend. Now a pertinent and forceful lesson had been given. They were able to read it. Henceforth their calling was to be that of taking, not the perishable dwellers in the waters but the imperishable souls of men. If they had been skillful in the one calling, so they would be in the other. The first had been but a faint symbol of the dignity and importance of the second. The wonder was explained. The sign was understood. These men now were to go out seeking to bring priceless lives under his control who made them for himself. Christ the Lord would now be their helper. He who had granted them exceptional success in the lower occupation, was ready to confer even greater success in the higher.

That is his object still. A chief need of those who are called to confession is an intense inspiration. Not merely a conviction of duty but a *zeal* for it, because of him whom it honors and who will own and further it. Once Christ possesses a heart, he is like a repressed spring, pushing it into tireless endeavor. Any less stimulus will, sooner or later, lose its force. Martyrdom awaited those earlier disciples, and does some still. Eighty Protestant ministers in Russia were, this last year, under sentence to Siberia for the crime of preaching the gospel. Frowning worldliness, intellectual conceit, and subtle cares may confront the Christian. Doubt and singular providences and hedged-up paths may be his portion, yet through any and all he is to know only the one object and press toward it as he may, determined "*to catch men.*" Satan and his minions are even more diligently set at the same game. The saloon and the dance-hall outrun the church. Michael and the devil disputing about the body of Moses is not half so solemn a contest as that in which he is engaged for these precious lives. Eliot's enheartening sentiment, "prayer and pains through faith in Jesus Christ

will do anything," is his also. The quieting admonition "Fear not" is at the same time a stirring one. He has no cause to waver or abandon the struggle. By his side is a greater than any earthly Bruce, keeping up the spirits of his companions as he crosses deep lochs in leaking boats, or bids his skeleton be carried at the head of his armies till Scotland is subdued. No empty appeal to a failing power answers or will answer the stern necessities of the Christian laborer. For that the Saviour spoke so plainly and wrought so grandly on Gennesaret, his friends have been able ever since to say as did Raymond Lull, the mediæval missionary, "He who loves not lives not; he who lives by the *Life*, cannot die."

De Witt S. Clark.

A SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM.

MARK 1 : 21–34.

"And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught," etc.

THE work of this Sabbath in Capernaum illustrates the truth of Christ's assertion that this city had been exalted to heaven in point of privilege, for an unusual number of his miracles were performed in the presence of its people.

Capernaum was situated upon the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, with lofty mountains of basalt behind it, and the beautiful waters of the lake, so illustrious in sacred history, before it. A dense population of Jews inhabited the region, and there was, besides, a considerable population of Greek and Roman merchants, adventurers, and soldiers. The people were in the main loyal to their Jewish institutions, and went up annually in great numbers to the feasts in Jerusalem. Upon the Sabbath days at home, great congregations gathered in the synagogues to hear their scriptures read and expounded. The character of the synagogue services is well illustrated by the introductory incidents of our lesson. They were not confined to a set discourse by a regular officer, but large freedom was allowed by the people to call upon strangers who were present. The services seem to have been much like what we should call a prayer and conference meeting. We have repeated instances of Paul's being invited to make addresses when he chanced to drop in upon a synagogue service far from home. So here, as on other occasions, Jesus availed himself of the gathering in the synagogue to unfold to them the great truths of his mission. What the subject of

his discourse was we do not know. We are only told of the manner of his address and of various incidents which seem to have interrupted it and to have occupied his attention and taxed his strength for the remainder of the day.

"He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." It was the authoritative *manner* of his preaching which astonished them. The scribes were in the habit of teaching by quotation. Instead of giving their own opinions, they occupied the time of their hearers with the sayings of Rabbi This and Rabbi That who had endeavored to unfold the meaning of the passage. They had a great accumulation of traditions concerning the meaning of the law and the prophets, and upon these they depended for the body of their discourse. But, as we see so clearly in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus cut himself loose from these traditions and spoke on his own authority. This is the significance of those passages in the Sermon on the Mount where he challenges the interpretations of "them of old time" and says, "But, I say unto you, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:" etc. At a later time we find the people astonished that Christ should claim to be Lord of the Sabbath day, having authority to depart from the habitual mode of observing it.

But, as we have said, the sermon of Christ upon the present occasion is not given, much as it would have gratified us to have had even a brief report. The failure of the Evangelists to gratify our curiosity is one of their most striking characteristics. But it was their first concern to establish the supernatural character of their Lord and of his mission. A singular occasion arose, during this Sabbath service, for the exercise of Christ's miraculous power. A sharp outcry of a man in distress was heard in the congregation, calling attention away from the regular speaker and centering it upon himself. It was that of a man possessed of an "unclean spirit," or, as Luke

has it, of an "unclean demon." The references to this class of unfortunate people are numerous in the Gospels, and, strange to say, are nearly all connected with the Saviour's mission in Galilee. Jerusalem did not seem to be afflicted with this class of unfortunates.

The symptoms presented by those said to be possessed with demons are in many cases such as we are familiar with in lunatics and epileptic persons of the present time. For this reason many are inclined to deny the reality of demoniacal possession, and to interpret all the references in the New Testament as figures of speech, or rather as a usage of language which accommodates itself to the understanding of the people rather than to the understanding of the speaker. According to this view, those who are spoken of as possessing unclean spirits are simply lunatics who were erroneously supposed by the people to be possessed.

But, however plausible this theory may be when applied to many cases, there are others to which it evidently cannot apply. Among them is the case of the Gadarene whose evil spirits carried on a conversation with Christ and showed the reality of their existence by parting from the man and entering into the swine. Another case, and perhaps the clearest of all, is that of which an account is given in the ninth chapter of Mark and in parallel passages. This was that of the dumb spirit which the disciples were not able to cast out, but which immediately left the child when brought into the presence of Jesus. The most decisive circumstance connected with this event is that the disciples asked him *privately* why they could not cast out the spirit. Here was an occasion in private conversation for the Saviour to have disabused their minds of the illusion concerning the demoniacal possession, if it was an illusion. But instead of doing anything of the sort, his whole answer confirmed them in the opinion which was

ordinarily held. The instance adduced in our lesson also confirms the reality of demoniacal possession. This demon addressed Jesus, and Jesus in turn addressed him and told him to come out of the man, and we are informed that the unclean spirit came out of him, tearing him and crying with a loud voice.

Mysterious, therefore, as it may be, we must accept it as a literal fact that evil spirits do sometimes take possession of men and bring them under their degrading control. This need not, however, lead us to believe in such possession at the present time, except upon the presentation of the most satisfactory evidence. It is suggested with much plausibility, by Trench and others, that a special dispensation was given to evil spirits to visit men when the Saviour was on the earth ; so that, as Satan himself appeared to Jesus in the wilderness to tempt him, Satan's emissaries were also let loose upon the Saviour, especially during the early years of his ministry when dealing with the ruder people of Galilee. Literally, therefore, the Saviour struggled with and overcame all the forces of the adversary — the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nor can we be entirely sure that evil spirits are wholly restrained from visiting men at the present time. Those who submit themselves to the reign of evil passions cannot ask to have entire immunity from the companionship and control of the emissaries of him who we are told in Scripture goes to and fro in the world seeking fit subjects for his machinations. Satan, while for the most part restrained by Divine Providence, has not yet been bound and wholly confined to the bottomless pit.

After the exciting experiences in the synagogue, the sympathies of the Saviour were aroused by the sickness of Peter's wife's mother, whom he immediately restored to health. Incidentally this account reveals to us the fact that Peter and Andrew owned a house, and so were

men of some property. In forsaking their nets and their homes, to follow Jesus, they had sacrificed all that most men hold dear. We perhaps emphasize too much in our minds the original poverty of the disciples. John had a home in Jerusalem, or somewhere else, to which he could take the mother of Jesus (John 19:27). The public office which Matthew held was one for which there would be great pressure brought to bear upon the central government in our own country. The apostles, like their Master, became poor for our sakes, and set us an example of the way we ought to regard worldly things if they come in conflict with our duties to Christ.

The remaining verses of our lesson simply multiply instances of healing which the Saviour was called upon to perform. As sustaining the views already presented concerning the reality of demoniacal possession, we should notice here that those possessed of devils, or demons, are twice contrasted with those who are sick, showing that, in the mind of the evangelist, the possession of demons was a malady which stood by itself. It is significant also that we are further told that the demons were not permitted to speak, because, as Luke has it, they knew him to be Christ (Luke 4:41). The reason of this prohibition is probably to be found in the disinclination which the Saviour had to premature notoriety. With the Jews the Christ was their lawful king, and would be suspected of political machinations for the overthrow of the Roman power. Christ was indeed the King of the Jews, but not in the sense in which the common people expected a king. His first supreme object was to unfold his spiritual mission and the reality of his condescension and love. At a later period, Peter acknowledged, in a private meeting of the apostles, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. The truth could be safely entrusted to the apostles at that time, but it could not be entrusted to the people of Galilee in the

earlier period of his ministry. Upon the Sabbath before his crucifixion, Jesus permitted the truth to be publicly proclaimed, and when directly asked by Pilate if he was the king, answered that he was, but that his mission was to bear witness to the truth. It was of the utmost importance to the Saviour to avoid political complications, and to prevent that misunderstanding of his mission which would arise if too great emphasis was laid upon his power to perform signs and wonders. It was evidently for this reason, and to avoid a premature announcement of his relation to the kingdom of Israel, that he afterwards withdrew from Galilee and for so many months secluded himself in the region beyond Jordan. His prohibition to the demons in our lesson is the beginning of the cautions which he habitually exercised to prevent the externals of his work from overshadowing its spiritual character.

It is important for our understanding of the New Testament to notice how much of the Gospels is simple narrative. Mark especially is devoted to the simple narration of facts. He gives us but few discourses and but few parables. The force of what the Saviour *said* is largely due to what he *was*, and our knowledge of what he was is derived principally from what he did. It is sometimes said that, if we had only the Sermon on the Mount and the various other discourses and parables which were uttered by Christ, we could get along very well without the miracles of the New Testament. A little reflection will show that this is a serious mistake. Christ spoke with authority and not as the scribes. His most important announcements are such as only a divine being could lawfully make. His power to perform miracles furnishes us, as it did the people of his time, with such credentials as we need to support the marvelous assumptions of power in the spiritual world which he claims in his discourses. When he says to the sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be for-

given thee," what reason has the sinner to believe that these words are true and that he who uttered them had authority so to do? The miracle which he had experienced in his own healing, the results of which were infusing new life and feeling into every part of his physical frame, was the credential which he needed, and it was sufficient and satisfactory. And so to us, a Saviour who could not heal the sick, and raise the dead, and rise from the grave himself, could not properly attest for us the teachings which we find in the New Testament concerning the forgiveness of sin. God alone can forgive sin, and his omniscience is required to assure us of that forgiveness, and to inform us of the conditions on which it may be secured.

What a touching picture of the work done by our Lord while he was upon the earth is presented in this day's experience! To the account of the raising of Peter's wife's mother, given in our lesson, Matthew adds the significant quotation from Isaiah, that this was in fulfillment of the prophet's words, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" (Matt. 8 : 17). It is impressive and affecting to notice how much is said, in the story of Christ's life, about his weariness, and how often he retired for rest. He was more weary than were the disciples who went about with him, for he bore a heavier burden than they. While in the very act of healing the sick and raising the dead, he repeatedly groaned and sighed, doubtless, as Keble has expressed it, because he saw so clearly the spiritual disease and death which still reigned in unwilling hearts and which could not be removed by the direct acts of divine omnipotence.

> The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,
> The fetter'd tongue its chain may break;
> But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
> The laggard soul, that will not wake,

> The guilt that scorns to be forgiven;
> These baffle e'en the spells of heaven;
> In thought of these, his brows benign.
> Not even in healing cloudless shine.

It was this constant burden upon his tender sympathies which weighed upon him so heavily and made him the man of sorrows that he was and acquainted with grief. There is no sorrow like that of unrequited love. Christ could have endured the piercing of the nails into his hands and his feet, if they had not been driven at the instigation of his own people. He could endure the mockery of his enemies; but to see his favorite disciple curse and swear that he never knew him was enough to break his heart. It was because he saw so much deeper into the real cause of the world's sorrows, and realized more fully than others the inadequacy of all temporal forms of relief, that he found so little relief in rescuing here and there a forlorn sufferer from his temporary ills. The day at Capernaum closed with many rejoicing hearts in view of temporal deliverance, and we may hope in view of many hearts regenerated by divine love. But what were these to him who leaves the ninety and nine who are safe in the fold to seek the lone one lost on the mountain side! While one sinner scorned his mission, our Saviour must continue to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

G. Frederick Wright.

A PARALYTIC HEALED.

MARK 2: 1–12.

"And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house." etc.

WE have in this lesson a remarkable and exceedingly impressive illustration of the pity and power of Jesus; also, incidentally, an irresistible proof of his Messiahship in that he assumes to forgive sins.

Matthew and Luke write of this same scene, each giving certain minor details which set before us the same general facts and teach the same general truths.

For about thirty years our blessed Lord had his home in the obscure and despised town of Nazareth. There he grew up from infancy to boyhood and from boyhood to manhood, in all respects like young men around him, save that "he knew no sin." In this home he wrought no miracles, challenged no special attention, laid no claims to Divine Sonship. The people of Nazareth "knew him not because they knew him so well." Finally he started out on his world-wide mission, speaking such wonderful words and doing such wonderful deeds as to attract and win the confidence of multitudes. They pressed around him in great crowds to hear the Word of God and witness the miracles which he wrought, as he healed all manner of diseases, cast out devils, and even raised the dead.

Erelong this marvelous Wonder-worker came to Capernaum, a city of considerable size and importance, which stood on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, "full of stately dwellings, and abounding in wealth and culture." There he tarried for a while,

then made his way to Jerusalem, where he wrought many miracles and attracted universal attention. He then returned to Galilee, everywhere teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

After a season spent in these missionary labors, he returned to Capernaum, where he awakened such enthusiasm that the people thronged around him — some afflicted with diseases, who would be healed, and others — Scribes and Pharisees — who would hear what this Nazarene had to say, and examine what he assumed to do.

Among the number of those crowding around our blessed Lord from one motive or another were friends or neighbors of a certain paralytic. These had either witnessed or heard of the marvelous miracles of the strange man among them, were believers in his healing power, and were anxious to have this poor palsied man made whole.

Note: —

I. *Human sympathy and helpfulness.*

The case of this paralytic was sad and seemingly hopeless. His whole body was in the grip of a distressing and fatal disease. If he was to be healed by the all-healing Christ, he must reach him and make personal appeal, or others must help him to Christ and make appeals for him, or he must wait for Christ perchance to pass his way. The disease upon him is so desperate that he cannot walk, and likely cannot speak. Human sympathy and helpfulness, therefore, are his demand. These graces find exercise, and result in placing him in the presence of the great Healer.

Whether those who accomplish this for the palsied man are personal friends of his, or neighbors, or casual acquaintances, or *strangers*, whose compassion is awakened by his sad, helpless, and hopeless condition, does not appear. But whoever they are, however related or unrelated, save by the common ties of humanity, they believe that

Jesus can and *will* heal him, if by any service which they can render, he can be led to look upon him. They therefore go to the palsied man, lift him tenderly on his couch or blanket, and bear him away to the house where Jesus is preaching and healing. We do not read of any question being asked the sufferer as to his willingness to be borne into that gracious presence, or as to his confidence of healing, should he be borne there. These men whose sympathy has been excited and whose service is rendered seem to act on their own responsibility without solicitations or hope of reward: hence our admiration for them.

When they reach the house where Jesus is engaged in his merciful ministries, they find it crowded with eager listeners in every room and hall and court. The people of Capernaum have flocked thither to hear a word, or even get a glimpse of him who had wrought such wonders in Jerusalem and in the regions of Galilee. All the doors and passageways are blocked with an anxious company, so that entrance is practically impossible. What shall be done? They find a stairway leading up to the flat roof, and up this stairway the wondering paralytic is borne — his heart, I fancy, rejoicing in the persistence of his friends, and beginning to fill with hope in reference to his healing. Reaching the roof of this house, a section of the balustrade or railing is removed, or the canvas covering is turned aside, and the paralytic is let down into the open court where Jesus looks upon him — a picture of pain, if not of despair.

I imagine our Lord suddenly stopping in his discourse. I imagine the paralytic looking around on the crowd in wonder, and up into the face of the great Healer in mute appeal for help. I imagine the people amazed and hushed to silence in view of what must have seemed to them an unwarrantable procedure, if not an act of presumption worthy of rebuke. I imagine all eyes turned

upon Jesus, and all hearts filled with strange emotions. Suspense, however, is soon over, for the Son of God cannot look on so sad a case and remain unmoved, or fail to exercise his healing power. Never has pain or sorrow made appeal to him in vain. He came to our suffering and sinning world, not only to work out redemption for the lost, but to do deeds which should relieve burdened humanity, and thus *prove* his Messiahship. For this purpose Jesus became incarnate; for this he taught and wrought; for this gave up his life on Calvary; for this was in Capernaum at the time in question.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that these men who found the paralytic and brought him to Jesus, were instruments or agents in attracting his attention, and that but for these sympathizing and helping men, or some others of like spirit, the poor paralytic never would have been there! We have therefore, here, a most impressive illustration of what human sympathy and human helpfulness can accomplish.

Jesus is not on our earth to-day in visible form to teach and heal, but he is here, though invisible. The sick too and suffering are all around us with spoken or mute appeal for help; the sorrowing also, all around us, waiting for comfort which only a kind, loving, unselfish heart can give; the sin-laden also, all around us, who need our help in reaching Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Oh, the sympathy we ought to feel for these, and the service we ought to render them! *We* may have health and strength; but *others* within our reach are sick and weak. *We* may be prospering in material affairs; but the poor and homeless walk by our side up and down the world. *We* may have been spared bereavements; but the broken-hearted cross our path, crushed under the burden of a great grief. *We* may have found forgiveness and peace with God; but the unforgiven sit by our

side in the place of prayer, or work by our side in the factory or store.

What the world wants to-day is human sympathy and helpfulness in glad, free exercise. No sorrowing suffering man, however the sorrow or the suffering has come, should ever be looked upon with indifference, or left without assistance, if it be in our power to serve him, either by rendering personal aid, or by enlisting others in his behalf. It is ours to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, cheer the sad, befriend the stranger, and especially to carry the sin-laden to Jesus, who alone can heal the hurt of sin.

Oh, if this spirit which prompted these men to bring the poor paralytic to Jesus was abroad in the world — if it was *our* prompting and governing spirit — also the prompting and governing spirit of the Church as a whole, what suffering, sorrow, and sin would have relief!

The blessed Lord is here. Let us aid men to get visions of him. He wants to speak the word which giveth liberty and life. Let us hasten with help for those who are in bondage — dead in sin, wondering where they shall find Jesus and how they shall reach him. Oh, what privilege is ours, as believers in and followers of the all-healing and all-forgiving Son of God!

II. *The unexpected blessing.* This was larger, richer, sweeter, diviner, than had been sought. So far as we know from any record of the miracle in question, the paralytic, when found and borne into the presence of Jesus, had no thought of healing save for his withered body, and it is doubtful if even *that* was hoped for until he found himself in the open court where Jesus stood, and where the great crowd had gathered. The terrible disease upon him must have been thought destined to be fatal. Possibly, in his helpless home, the paralytic may have said to himself: "If I could only see Jesus, and let my

sad case make appeal, he may have compassion on me;" and possibly there may have been in his heart some faint hope that some time Jesus would come his way. In any case, however, healing for his *body* — cure of the palsy upon him — was the only hope he had, the only thought ever in his mind. I imagine the same was true of these sympathizing, helping friends!

Well, there the paralytic is in the presence of Jesus, and there these friends are. Shall *human hope* be the measure of *divine compassion?* So far as we read, no prayer is offered for healing, either by the sufferer or by his friends. All are silent, and the crowd looks on. But for Jesus, suffering is more eloquent than speech. It is enough for him to see what he sees, and realize the intense longings in these hearts before him. The thing, however, which makes strongest appeal, is what Jesus discovers to be true of these sympathizing friends — and true also, I suppose, of the paralytic — their faith — not only the paralytic's faith, but his *friends'* faith — and chiefly the faith of these friends in his behalf. *This* it was that made special appeal, was regarded and rewarded. Through much difficulty they brought the sufferer there; they believed in reference *to* him — practically *for* him.

Reading the record as recorded by the Evangelist, it seems to be a question of palsy and nothing more. The sufferer there is not presented as a religious inquirer, nor these friends as religious inquirers in his behalf. Their *supreme faith*, however, coupled with Jesus' knowledge of what was in the paralytic's heart, caused him to bestow an unexpected blessing; to do infinitely more for this poor man than either he or his friends asked, or conceived as possible.

The unuttered prayer is: "*Lord, heal the body.*" The answer to this unuttered prayer is: "*Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*"

Is the palsied man amazed? I am sure he is! Are his friends amazed? I am sure they are! Is the crowd amazed? I am sure it is! No such word as this has been expected. Here, however, is Jesus' opportunity, and he embraces it! Such faith must not fail of recognition and reward. Such a privilege of proving his Messiahship must not pass unimproved! There is an uncommon measure of faith, hence an uncommon blessing bestowed on *one* because of *others*. Oh, the power of a mighty faith, not only in securing the favor of God for him who has this mighty faith, but for *others*, in behalf of whom this faith is exercised! Such a faith lays hold on God, not only for self, but for men around us; and further is often full of great surprises, bringing to us the *unexpected*, and laying at our feet a larger good than we have ever had in mind.

It is not safe to say that the faith of one ever saves another who has no faith. It is, however, safe to say that the faith of one is *influential* in saving another, and that many are saved instrumentally because of the faith of others exercised in their behalf. The Scriptures are full of illustrations of this fact, and the same of all history, as we should see if heart history were written. The faith of parents has instrumentally saved children; that of teachers, their scholars; that of preachers, their parishioners; that of friends, their friends. The range of faith is marvelous, and the same of its results. Oh, what incitement and encouragement here for all Christian workers! They who believe in God have power with God, and may work wonders for the unbelieving, in that they can aid them for themselves to see and to believe. No soul has ever yet risen to the full measure of its possibilities in reference to faith. The blessed Lord wants to surprise us with unexpected blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others for whom we seek a blessing.

III. *The different effects of this forgiving word of Jesus.* Certain scribes who are present begin to cavil, not openly, but in their hearts, and to say within themselves: "Why doth this man thus speak? he blaspemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?" Here they assume that Jesus has spoken blasphemy in saying to the paralytic: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." They believe — and it is true — that to forgive sin is the "incommunicable prerogative of God." They regard Jesus as a mere man. Their thought is that it is easy to utter blasphemy; but what about the cure? Jesus will silence the cavil of these scribes. Thus he says to the paralytic: "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," proving that he has power to forgive sins by commanding the palsy to depart. The argument of Jesus is: "I cannot cure this paralytic unless I have the power to forgive sins; this cure shall be the testimony of my right to say: 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.'"

I imagine now a hush like that of the grave on this whole crowd, and every eye turned to the couch of the sufferer. Will strength come into those palsied limbs? Will any effort be made to discover whether or no strength has come? Quicker, I suppose, than these words were spoken, the paralytic rises, takes up his bed, and walks forth in the presence of them all, as if he had never been a helpless cripple!

What is proved? That Jesus has power to work a miracle? Yes, this, and infinitely more — that he has power to *forgive sins!* Of these two facts the people were convinced, for "They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion," or as Luke expresses it: "We have seen strange things to-day," meaning nothing like this was heretofore ever known.

What effect this wonderful illustration of power had on the prejudiced and captious scribes is not recorded. They

doubtless still said within themselves: "This man blasphemeth;" and likely went away to discuss the wonder, and to continue unbelieving. But the crowd — the common people — were led to glorify God, or praise him, and acknowledge divine agency in the wonder which had been wrought before them.

Such were the different effects produced on those who heard what Jesus said and witnessed what he did — some believing and confessing; others in the presence of the same testimony continuing to disbelieve and cavil.

It is the same to-day all round the world. The same sermon, under the illumination of the spirit, convinces and conquers one, but leaves another unconquered and unconvinced. The same narrative of personal experience is accepted by one as genuine and glorious, not an evaporating sentiment, but a solid reality; by another is accounted an exaggeration, if not a strange hallucination.

The paralytic in this lesson stands as a representation of fallen and redeemed humanity; the crowd in that Capernaum court stand as a representation of the different ways in which men look at and deal with divine things.

The practical lessons to be drawn from this miracle are: —

1. That God can read the secrets of the human heart. What these scribes "said within themselves," or thought, Jesus fully understood; not as men sometimes read the thoughts of others by the expression of the face, but by a divine discernment, proving what is written in the letter to the Hebrews, that "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Deeds, therefore, in the sight of God are not only acts performed — things done — but purposes cherished which may never be accomplished, and thoughts coming which may never be expressed in words. These same facts

appear in Jesus' knowledge of the faith in the heart of the paralytic, and in the hearts of his friends.

2. That divine power avails for man when in the exercise of faith he obeys the words of Jesus. According to the record, this paralytic was first forgiven and then healed; in other words, received the greater and the unexpected blessing before he attempted to rise and walk. Jesus, however, saw in this man the spirit of obedience, and knew that he would obey. Had this obedient spirit been wanting, no cure would have been effected; he would have died a paralytic.

He who is to be blessed of God in the forgiveness of sins, or is to realize any spiritual good, must be obedient. All divine favors are thus conditioned. Whatever God, by his word, or by his spirit, or by his providence, makes known to man as duty must be done if he is to come within the range of the divine favor.

This truth applies especially to those who would be forgiven. They must hear and heed the voice of God, whether it calls them to confess, or sacrifice, or serve. No sinner is ever saved until he yields unreservedly to God, willing to follow where he shall lead; neither is any Christian ever joyful until he learns to walk in harmony with the recognized will of God.

3. That Jesus is the Messiah. This he proved in the miracle which he wrought — on which he staked the evidence of his Messiahship.

The paralytic was cured by a simple word of command. The same of all on whom the miracles were wrought.

The word to the centurion was: "Go thy way; thy son liveth;" to the impotent man: "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk;" to the leper: "Be thou clean;" to the tempest: "Peace, be still;" to the widow's son: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise;" to Lazarus: "Come forth." These marvels prove the Messiahship.

Putting these marvels of the early gospel age by the side of human experience, — an equal marvel, — and who can doubt that Jesus was the Son of God?

Ours is an age of testimony. We have gone beyond the experimental period. Jesus has proved himself worthy of enthronement in the human heart. He who is not convinced of the reality and richness of Christian experience would not be convinced though one should rise from the dead and walk again on the earth.

Justin E. Twitchell.

JESUS LORD OF THE SABBATH.

MARK 2: 23–28; 3: 1–5.

"And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the corn-fields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn," etc.

WHEN the Almighty Creator blessed and hallowed the seventh day of the week and gave it to mankind he did not impose upon it an unchanging code of rules for its right observance or require it to stand in the same sequence among the other days. As its holy light breaks at each instant upon a new portion of the round globe, it comes to pass that the Sabbath evening at one spot is the Sabbath morning at another. Has the real Sabbath as God designed it ever been kept anywhere? We may well doubt whether it has. The day which Jesus sanctified by acts of mercy and on which he satisfied his hunger as he walked through the wheat fields was not the same day outwardly which Moses commanded in the wilderness and which Nehemiah sought to restore after the exile. Traditions of men had woven swathing bands of minute regulations all around it and opened the door to querulous complaints from legalists when the holy purposes for which the day was first given were being secured. The Sabbath of the middle ages was not that of primitive Christianity, nor can we take Luther or Calvin or the Puritans of the English Commonwealth or the godly fathers of New England as our only patterns. They all were at variance on minute points. How can we discover and hold to the really divine and holy institution which God set up when he made the world? The answer is simple and sufficient. "The day of rest and gladness, the

day of joy and light" will come just as soon as men grasp the vital and enduring principles of the gospel which Christ illustrated and apply them in his spirit to the still vexed Sabbath problem. Rules must change. Principles remain. The scene now before us gives us certain principles which we cannot study without highest profit and interest. His actions were symbolical and intended to be object lessons to coming generations.

Let us begin and end with this proposition: *that Jesus Christ is now and always Lord of the Sabbath.* And we need to be reminded of this in transition times like these when social customs founded on country or pastoral life are fast giving way to others inevitable among vast crowds of humanity, when men are suddenly enjoying railroads and street cars, telegraphs and telephones, when immense factories are demanding care at every instant of the year, when steamships are plowing the ocean night and day, and communities are separated as to religious interests or are withdrawing from all religious restraints. In these bewildering circumstances we are tempted to believe that Christ has left his lordship over his own day and that we are fighting our hard way alone to preserve and transmit our precious heritage. No! He is still the Lord of his own day. To-morrow he will hold the same supremacy and so on until the end. He will secure its due sanctity by means which he has at his command and in ways known only to him.

We must notice carefully the order of this wonderful argument. Why does he come to say, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: *so that* the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath"? What is the precise connection between these two statements, each of which carries immense weight with it? Here is the solution of what we have made the "Sabbath question": —

I. First of all it is said that the day was made for the

man and not the man for the day, or, in other words, the end is greater than the path to it, the man himself superior to the institution designed for his good. But what is the *man* who has this supremacy over the day? If it be man at his lowest, as a mere working or pleasure-loving animal, with his back bent by six days' toil and his mind sodden by hopeless poverty; if it be man without God and hope and reverence and spiritual life, then he should dictate the method of keeping the day. But if it be man at his highest, with an immortal nature, with a face set toward the skies, with longings after God and heaven and holiness, then we have another being to dominate over the day which God made for his good. Every one who argues for a lax and irreligious Sabbath flies to these solemn words of our Lord as a defense, assuming (what is not to be found in them) that it was man at his weakest and lowest to whom the institution of a rest day came at the first. But the following sentence destroys the false assumption. In that Jesus asserts his own lordship because he is the Son of man. He stands for humanity as a whole, as its epitome, its summing up. The day is under him as the second Adam, the head of a new, peculiar race, the ideal man restored to the image of God and led back into the lost paradise. The Sabbath is for man at his highest, and Christ is just that: he is man at his highest and it is in and through him that man comes into the true rest and blessedness which God enclosed within the sacred day which he set apart for ever for the world.

This is the clew to such teachings as the apostles afterward gave as to the seeming abrogation of times and seasons and days and years, and it shows us that, whatever our ideal lordship in Christ may be, we at present are not above a law of Sabbath observance. We have not risen far enough with Christ to sit with him on his throne

and control anything. But as we come into his spirit and walk in newness of life and are above bondage to statutes and ordinances, while we keep them, we reach out into the glorious liberty of God's children. Jesus justified the disciples and himself in eating the corn in the field because man's real needs are always greater than any merely outward rules for his conduct. The temple is less sacred than the human beings who use it for God's glory. He, as the Son of man, was greater than the building which should perish.

II. Another fact now comes into sight: *Jesus broke the Pharisaic Sabbath in order to save the true day of rest from God.*

He appeared to violate a rule which had been created by traditions of men against the plain words of Deut. 23: 25 when he healed the man with the withered hand. Six times they charged him with sin in this particular and in five cases he had done some act of mercy to the suffering, so that his indignation broke out in the scornful inquiry, "Is it lawful to do well on the sabbath days, . . . to save life, or to kill it?" He came to earth at a time when religion, for the most part, had become a round of externalities through which he had to break before finding the core of truth within. The rabbins said that there were 365 prohibitions in the law — just as many as the days of the year, and 248 positive precepts — the number of the bones of the body, and that this made just 613 precepts, which was the number of letters in the decalogue, and so they could never be changed. Two schools of hostile interpreters arose over the question whether it were lawful to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath day. Who can wonder that in such a world of trivialities justice and love fled away? So, to shock men out of their legalism, Jesus broke the traditions of the fathers and then by his symbolic acts he set forth the works which

the Father had always been doing and which the Son also must do.

III. But his work was more radical and far-reaching in reconstructing the day which had been given to man and which man had perverted and lost.

He changed the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week in order to fill it full of higher blessings. He had always been Lord of the Sabbath, as he must continue to be. He stood as its superior when through him all things were created and made that were made, and since all things consist or stand together in him he is head over all things — all institutions and forms that tell for the good of mankind. He was Lord of the Sabbath established in the wilderness and commanded in the Ten Words of Moses. He is Lord of the new Sabbath which now speaks to the world of his resurrection and ascension as the Son of man to the throne of the Father. In order to save it the time came when it was necessary to give it a new meaning and let it gradually supersede what had waxed old and was ready to vanish away. What had told of God's rest from creation was henceforth to tell of his work in redemption and to be a call to life and immortality. Over this literalists stumble because they fail to find the enacting clause in the New Testament which abrogates the observance of the seventh and establishes the first day in its place. And if Christ is not to-day Lord of the Sabbath, we may well wonder where we are. If for eighteen centuries his Church has been without his guidance and sanction, then let us return to the Jewish bondage until he sets us free. But the Holy Ghost is a reality and to say that that day of God which devout souls in all the Christian centuries have kept is without divine sanction is to say that the whole New Testament is the work of men no more moved by the Holy Ghost than other men have been. Jesus did two things. He

broke the crust of conventionality and said what the day was not designed to be ; then he sent the Spirit to dwell with his own and lead them into all truth both in practice and doctrine, and the Sabbath was part of the truth. In neither respect has the Church attained to perfection, but again, in neither has it been lost in the bogs of its own sins and ignorances. The Christian Church gradually made the new day take the place of the old. The old moon waned and the new moon thrust its white sickle through the calm evening clouds in silence and beauty.

IV. *The people of Christ in and through him are to make the day what it should be for the rest and salvation of man.* For, in a large sense, they are the "man" to whom the day was given at first. They are one with their Lord, so that if he is Lord, they are lords also, and what he did they should seek to repeat with his sanction and guidance. There is no other standard of Sabbath observance possible than the enlightened Christian sentiment, and hence it is of highest importance that that sentiment should find full expression and enforcement. The question is at the front to-day and so it will be to-morrow and always while the Church lives with the very life of Christ. There must be changes to preserve life itself. We have not reached the final law nor will our children after us, save as that law lies bedded in principles of the gospel whose rules are alterable from age to age. We deplore the laxity of times in which we live and we repudiate the disgrace attending the historical violation of the common law of the Sabbath in the Columbian Exposition ; but let us still remember that Jesus is on the throne. Never since he rose and the old day passed over into the new has there been so much of his spirit of help for the fallen as we are now seeing. Sunday is filled with earnest and fruitful labor to relieve and save. Our hearts are troubled at the change going on in regard to the second preaching serv-

ice, but how are we assured that we are always to follow the custom of the fathers in that particular? May not the time be near when, in all the great centers at least, a wholly different service will follow the first one and wholly different forms be adopted of bringing Christ to men? Possibly ministers, having served their congregations faithfully in the Sabbath morning, may go out into the streets or into halls and theaters, where the crowds easily go, to give them the bread of heaven. The world is the subject of redemption. The Church has more to do than pluck brands from the burning; it must put out the fires of temptation. Can we give humanity a better chance? Can we make city streets safer for son and daughter? Can we make it harder to become a drunkard and easier to cease being one? These are great questions upon which the conduct and words of Jesus on the Sabbath throw light. Christianity sometimes needs to be saved from itself, just as Judaism needed to be delivered. If Christ maketh free, we are free indeed.

Edward N. Packard.

THE TWELVE CHOSEN.

MARK 3:6–19.

"And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him," etc.

HENRY WARD BEECHER was certainly right in his definition of the elect and the non-elect. The elect, said he, are whosoever will, and the non-elect are whosoever won't. In the passage we are studying we find our Saviour choosing out twelve. They are those who will accept him. But they are not alone. They stand in contact and in contrast with others, and as we study these others we find them separating into classes, each class representing some among men to-day in their attitude toward the Saviour.

I. Here were *the plotting leaders.* These leaders were angry at Christ for doing good. Their power and prestige were vanishing before his growing influence. Before he came they had had complete authority and their influence had been unquestioned. Now another had come to the front and was absorbing public attention. His teachings were in many respects contrary to their own and he was certainly weakening their hold upon the people. They could not endure this with complacency. They hated him for displacing them and sought his downfall.

Their difference of opinion and purpose is brought out to a certain extent in the lesson. They were especially out of sympathy with him in his benevolent purpose. He had just been healing a man of a withered hand, but this did not give them any pleasure. They cared nothing for the needy and distressed. They had only disgust where he had pity and love. They did not share in his recogni-

tion of human brotherhood and he only belittled himself in their eyes by his sympathy with suffering humanity. This was not strange. There is no sin more common in the world than that of caste, and even to-day in our most religious communities the Church of God suffers immeasurably by a disposition on the part of the well-to-do, the better educated, and those of social position to hold aloof from those they consider beneath them and to fence in their church privileges by aristocratic distinctions.

Christ's very interest in others was a standing rebuke to the self-seekers of his day. His life and activities were a constant condemnation of their own course. The worst enemies of missionaries are mercenary men whose efforts to prey upon the poor are hindered and whose vices are rebuked by the lives of these good men. In the South Sea Islands, among the Eskimos, among the Indians of the United States, many such instances are constantly occurring. Hate, and often persecution, follow the philanthropist whose efforts at Christianizing and civilizing tend to protect the degraded and helpless from the human hawks that are watching to pounce upon them. An honest Indian agent who sought to break up the fraudulent delivery of worthless goods to the Indians was cruelly hounded for his efforts. A missionary who exposed the illicit trading in liquor by government officials was similarly treated. This is to be expected. Goodness always awakens hostility. It leads to efforts to check rapacity, to protect the weak, to block selfishness, and to break down exclusiveness. All this goes counter to the prejudices of leaders among men and in the nature of the case awakens determined and bitter opposition.

It is significant that with the Pharisees, as it so often is to-day, prejudice served to justify opposition to Christ. Like many another of evil mind, these old-time leaders quieted conscience by making much of insignificant mat-

ters. They laid great stress on a specified method of observing the Sabbath. They insisted on certain methods which had grown up among them and were without divine authority. Christ broke with them on this point and shocked their intense conservatism by denying the obligation of customs which had no scriptural warrant and which violated the dictates of humanity. The needs of the poor rather than the punctilios of fashion controlled his action. When once this became plain, he had trouble with the Pharisees, till finally they brought him to his death. There are similar religious leaders to-day who brand evangelistic efforts to reach the common people, accompanied by new methods adapted to modern needs, as undignified, out of taste, sensational.

We see in the passage we are studying a strange union of forces. The Pharisees and Herodians joined hands in opposition to Christ, — the intense religionist and the worldly politician, — those who demanded Jewish rule and those who favored Cæsar. Their dislike of one another was forgotten in their common opposition to Christ. Their one purpose was to be rid of Christ. They would have none of his teachings; they would break up his influence and put him out of the way. There was a purpose so intense and controlling as to bring together men of widely differing feelings and lives. The Church and the world of that day joined hands, as it has so many times since, to rid itself of the reformer.

II. Another class represented in this lesson is *the eager multitude*. At this period in our Lord's life there was a great contrast in the attitude towards him of the religious leaders and the common people. The former were satisfied that they could not use him for their selfish ends and so had broken with him. The latter had not yet made a like discovery and so were eagerly following him. They thronged upon him from every quarter. They

came from Judæa and Jerusalem, from Idumæa, from Peræa and Decapolis, from Galilee, and even from Tyre and Sidon. They followed him to the Sea of Galilee, a great multitude.

And what brought them? Curiosity and a desire for temporal benefits. They came unto him "when they had heard what great things he did." "He had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him." Their motives were legitimate, though not the highest.

They were curious to see his miracles. This had the advantage of arousing their interest in Christ and of securing their attention. It was, of course, a most superficial motive in seeking Christ and was not to be encouraged. When Herod desired Christ to work some miracle before him, Christ would not. There must be limits to curiosity. There comes a time when curiosity as a motive is an impertinence. It is well enough at the first, but when once the worth of Christ is known, a higher motive should draw us to him. Curiosity may serve to give a start to the religious feelings, but it cannot furnish the motive power for a religious life. In this it is like the launching of a ship. The power of gravitation serves to carry a ship down the ways into the water, but there its influence ceases. Then there must be steam power or sails to carry the ship along.

Nor was the desire for temporal benefits to be blamed, if kept within proper limits. Our Saviour recognized such desires and appealed to them. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" he said, "and all these things shall be added unto you." Christianity is designed for the benefit of the whole man. It elevates the race. Salvation has to do with the whole man, body as well as soul, the earthly life as well as the heavenly. Take the case of Hawaii, which of late has attracted so

much attention. There have been amazing changes in the condition of these islanders. They are no longer savage cannibals, but a civilized people. The Princess Kaiulani, for example, who has recently visited these shores, is universally acknowledged to be a cultivated and charming young lady. Nothing but the religion of Jesus as taught by the missionaries has lifted her out of the degradation of her ancestors.

But the desire for the temporal benefits which are secured through Christ is no more a sufficient motive to the religious life than is curiosity. Both should simply lead up to spiritual desires. We must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Here was the trouble with the multitude. They fell away from Christ when they found he would not be a temporal king, but instead demanded of them a spiritual life and the practice of self-denial.

Nothing will hold the multitude to Christ but a changed heart. A genuine love to him is the one thing that can make their interest permanent. A missionary at the North End, in Boston, once tried the device of reaching the poor people of the neighborhood by supplying doughnuts and coffee to all who came to hear him preach. This drew an audience for a while, but when the supply of food ceased the congregation disappeared.

III. The third class mentioned in the lesson is *the testifying demons.* These demons acknowledged his power, and were unable to withstand it. There are two kinds of force exerted by divinity, the power of force and the power of love — compulsion and persuasion. The former force is used in the case of demons, the latter in the case of men. Men are treated with great consideration; their free will is recognized and there is no interference with it. Demons, on the other hand, have been fully tested and have fallen, and in their case, as an appeal to their

choice is hopeless, force only is available. The demons must bow before Christ, and consequently he drives them before him by the exertion of an almighty power.

It is noticeable that these demons testified to Christ's position and person. They knew him and could not deny him. There has been a remarkable frankness on the part of evil or worldly men in acknowledging the worth of Christ. It would seem as though they could not be silent regarding him. Thus Napoleon the cruel warrior, Rousseau the unbeliever, Tom Moore and Burns and Byron, voluptuaries, N. P. Willis, the frivolous man of the world, have agreed in praising Christ. The mental powers of such men are often keen and they can see true worth while not willing to accept the logical conclusions of their convictions. Their intellects are won when their hearts will not yield.

But Christ refused the testimony of the demons. Why? Because it was not friendly and was not done with a purpose of service. It was from a selfish and unworthy motive — merely as an apology for an unwilling submission. They yielded, because they had to, because Christ was divine. They were chagrined at their helplessness and pointed to Christ's divinity as an explanation. Such a testimony could do little good. It would win no needy soul; it would attract no one to Jesus; and therefore he forbade it. The testimony of evil men is of little value. The preaching of unconverted men, such as occurs occasionally in all churches and more especially in state churches, where forms rather than genuine conversion are insisted on, can accomplish little. Teaching in the Sabbath-school when done by the unconverted is an injury, not a help. When the blind lead the blind both fall into the ditch. To preach Christ requires character. If there is lacking that consistent life which alone can prove sincerity and win confidence, words are of small value.

IV. One other class mentioned in the lesson is represented by *the chosen twelve.* It is worth while to notice here their small number. A sifting process was going on and only a few were retained out of the great number who came to Christ at first. Long before, the demons had arrayed themselves against Christ, and the Pharisees and Herodians had stepped out and taken sides with the demons. The poison of selfishness was working and it would not be long before the multitudes, disappointed in Christ, would side with their leaders. Out of all this number only a few would be left — a dozen were selected as apostles, called apart into a mountain where they might receive instruction and a spiritual life that should give them power to go forth and win a world for Christ.

But these were not great men as the world judges of greatness. Two of them were subsequently called "unlearned and ignorant." They were Galilæans, and so not of the best blood of the nation. They were fishermen, and so not men of position or influence. Peter was by nature impulsive, boastful, and cowardly; Matthew was a hated publican; Thomas was a doubter; Judas Iscariot was a traitor. All at first were thinking of place and contending for preëminence. Here was an illustration of the fact that "not many wise, not many mighty" are called, but "the weak things of this world and the things that are not."

Yet here was an amazing power. On the mountain-top were a few fishermen chosen and commissioned to save the world. What could be expected of them? And yet here was the seed of divine truth; here was the gospel to go forth over all the earth; here was the blessed influence to change the world. This was a marvelous spiritual force. It was because God was with them. They were the beginning of a mighty kingdom which

should go on steadily growing till all the kingdoms of this world should recognize its sway.

It deserves especial notice that these twelve who were the beginning of the Church were chosen by Christ for their work, and derived all their strength from their connection with him. Those who have been specially influential in extending the knowledge of Christ in the world are those who have been marked by the presence of Christ. Christ has manifestly had possession of them and directed them. Christ is like the power house in an electric system, sending out his secret subtile force on the wires of human speech and Christian effort to the farthest parts the earth.

And what were these apostles to do? Three things: to be with him, to preach, and to cast out devils. They were to seek communion with Christ and so develop the Christian life; to bear their testimony to Christ and so win souls, and to set themselves in opposition to sin and so conquer the world for Christ.

The sifting and eliminating process is steadily going forward. One after another those opposed to Christ are thrown out, till at last Christ reaches his own. Where do we stand? We are surely in one of the classes that have been considered. Are we on the mountain-top by our Saviour's side? We may know our companionships. We may know our power and opportunity. The Lord Jesus will enable us to be of service and is opening the way. All that is needful is that we be filled with Christ. In the valley of the Lauterbrunen in Switzerland there is a railroad running up the steeply shelving mountain-side to the village of Mürren, that is operated on a very peculiar principle. Two cars are connected by an endless cable, one at the top of the mountain and the other at the bottom. When the car at the top is filled with passengers a tank beneath is opened to receive a supply of water, and

when once the tank is full the car descends, drawing up as it goes down the car at the opposite end. There should be a parallel to this in our Christian experience. When we are on the mountain-top we must be filled with Christ and then descend from the mountain to do our work in the world below, that as we thus come from our blessed privilege of communion, laden with the treasure of such an experience, we may lift others also to the heights of Christian privilege.

Addison P. Foster.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

LUKE 6: 20–31.

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God."

LUKE'S report of the Sermon on the Mount differs from that of Matthew in that it is much briefer. Luke condenses into eighteen verses that which Matthew tells in one hundred and nine. Luke selects the truths of that memorable discourse which would be especially adapted to his Gentile readers; namely, universal principles of a religious life, true for all peoples and for all times. For instance, Luke does not mention Christ's comparison between the religion of the Pharisees and the true righteousness, because Gentile believers were not acquainted with the Pharisaic type. Luke indeed does not give all the laws of the spiritual life as announced by Christ in his discourse, only a few are emphasized.

It is sometimes said that this sermon was deficient in not setting forth the doctrines peculiar to Christianity. But we are to remember that it was spoken to men who had already given their hearts to the Christ. To be sure no mention is made of the cross, and yet the spirit of the cross permeates the entire sermon. The sacrificial element is prominent. No man can accept the teachings of that sermon and make them the law of life without having yielded his will wholly to God, and the cross of Christ implies a complete crucifixion of the human will.

We should expect Jesus would promulgate the fundamental laws of spiritual life. As founder of the kingdom of God he would lay down those principles on which the

kingdom was to rest. If, as he said, it was a kingdom not of this world, then its unworldly character will be made apparent in his teachings, and it is with this contrast that the sermon opens.

I. *Christ proclaimed a new theory of human blessedness*, and in doing so he came into conflict with the idea of happiness current in the world. Christ told his hearers who were the truly blessed. Notice that he did not attack anybody or discuss the religions of men; but he spoke of the spiritual benefits of those who were, and would be, members of the kingdom. If this new kingdom was to be one of spiritual blessing, then only the man who "suffered from a want of what belongs to the spiritual life could experience the value it bestows." Therefore he said, "Blessed are the poor," or "poor in spirit." No high qualifications were necessary to membership, nor good works, nor stedfastness in character; but rather an acute *sense of lack* of these things.

Christ gave his first beatitude to those who are oppressed by the consciousness of their moral deficiencies. We are not wont to consider that feeling of lack as possessing any merit. It is a painful, burdensome feeling; but Christ declared that it lay at the foundation of character building. He coupled with it the sense of longing after attainment. "Blessed are those who hunger."

Blessed is the impatient man who is striving for patience; the covetous man who is longing for generosity; the slothful man who craves the spirit of diligence; the censorious and lustful who in tears and cries strive for charity and purity.

"Blessed are those who weep" — in whom is a sense of sorrow over the misfortunes and sins of mankind. Blessed is the man who takes the world with its pain and disappointment into his heart and bears it as a mother does a child; who cannot divorce himself from all concern for

the distress and failure of his brother man; who looks into his own life also and sees how far short it is of realizing the ideal of Christ. Blessed is that man.

"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you for my sake, and separate you from their company." This is a hard saying, for man loves the society of his fellows. He likes their favor and esteem and the new heart given him at regeneration intensifies the feeling of brotherhood; and yet the man, all aglow with sympathy and love, is set aside and rejected because of his devotion to the Christ. When he is best fitted to do them good men turn from him. They despise him. The rebuff astonishes and chills him for the moment and he begins to doubt the value of his new faith. Blessed is he then, for heaven is nearer than ever before and a sense of divine fellowship is given to strengthen and satisfy him. Here is a child who has become a follower of Christ and tries to lead a consistent life. The atmosphere of the home is worldly and wholly out of sympathy with his new purpose. Joke and ridicule meet him as he tries to live near to God. Parents positively forbid the child to identify himself with the Church of Christ. He is narrowly watched and seduced and badgered, and all for Christ's sake. "Blessed is such a child, for he is persecuted for righteousness' sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven."

Over against this new blessedness stands the world's blessedness, upon which Christ pronounces his woe.

"Woe to the rich"; "Woe to you who are full now"; "Woe unto you who laugh now"; "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." How this "woe" cuts at the root of what men call happiness! Why this abrupt contrast? Why such arraignment of the causes of earthly joy? The answer is plain: there is no room in worldly happiness for anything more to be developed out of it. It ends in itself. The rich, the full, the mirthful, the pop-

ular are all satisfied with the things they have. Their life brings them no aspiration. They lose their faculty of longing for higher things. Their very abundance stupefies them. Their hearts are poor soil for the seeds of spiritual life, and when the time arrives that they see the insufficiency of their so-called advantages they will have lost their power to desire better things. They have to be content with an unsatisfying satiety.

But, on the other hand, the life of God's child is blessed in that it is full of aspiration for the unperishable things. He is full of energy and movement towards the unattained. Food and money and popularity dwindle to a low level before the glories of victory over sin, clear faith, and fellowship with God. His spiritual aspiration makes him alert, liberal, sympathetic. He is conscious of living as he never lived before, of new and strange impulses coming down into his soul.

II. *Christ gave a new emphasis to the law of love.* "Love your enemies."

There are three methods of dealing with those who hate us. One method is that of revenge, the paying back double for all the injury we receive, meting out in kind and to any degree what is measured to us. Let anger and malice do their deadly work on those who maltreat us. This is the method of the animal. It is that of the natural heart unaided by considerations of prudence. The second method is the one suggested in the Old Testament: "Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." This is an advance on the preceding because it tempers resentment somewhat and confines it to the paying back of an exact equivalent for the damage received. Malice cannot be unbridled, vengeance cannot be lawless; two blows cannot be struck for one; two eyes of an enemy cannot be knocked out to recompense for our loss of one. The popular maxim of this method is "Give back as good as he sends." The

majority of people never get beyond this law, for it seems to have a sort of justice in it. It appears to satisfy also the law of compensation, and when each party in the quarrel has given and received the same amount of punishment justice seems to have been satisfied.

The third method is that suggested by our Lord, which consists in treating our enemy not worse, nor as he deserves, but better; in other words, to love him. Take no notice of his curses, hatred. That such a teaching was far in advance of the moral level of Christ's time is evident from the fact that it is far ahead of the average moral attainment to-day. However much it may be practiced by individuals, it is not yet recognized as a law among nations. The question is what will most quickly subdue enmity between two peoples; retaliation or love. The Christian is a child of peace and bound to promote peace. Shall he resent or love? Retaliation does not destroy the feeling of resentment, but only satisfies it. The more it is satisfied the deeper it grows, and it will be more ready to spring up at any new provocation; but love cleans the soul from its sense of grievance. The moment we begin to do good to our enemy and pray for him, the last vestige of our hatred departs. We thereby undermine his hatred also. When he sees that we do not entertain resentment his own malice abates. Our magnanimity throws his anger into such unpleasant relief that he slinks out of it with either a bad or good grace.

But we are to love our enemies without regard to the effect our love may have upon them. Suppose that it does not soften their hatred but rather intensifies it: we are to love them just the same, because that is the attitude of mind and heart we are to take toward all mankind. It makes no difference what feelings they have toward us. Suppose they reject our overtures and prayers in their behalf and do not wish to be reconciled to us:

very well; we cannot do anything more, but we can still go on loving them and hold ourselves ready to do them a kindness when the opportunity offers. You may love the man who refuses to recognize you on the street, who will not allow his children to associate with yours. Because we live in a time when open acts of hostility between individuals are not allowed, when the enemy cannot openly profess his enmity, therefore he is compelled to hide it in his heart; and he may think that he is obeying the law of Christianity if he never allows his enmity to manifest itself in word or deed. But the hatred is there and perhaps gaining strength by constant repression. This precept of our Lord is aimed at that secret feeling. It must give place to that of love, and this love is not sentiment, is not feeling. It must come forth in "doing good" to the enemy — in praying for him, in wishing the best things for him, in doing for him what you would do for a friend.

III. *Christ announced a new law of retaliation.* "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloke withhold not thy coat also." "Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again."

The law of retaliation must be interpreted by the law of love, and the meaning of Christ here is that we are not to take the law into our own hands and strike back at the man who strikes us. The instinct of self-preservation is God-given, but we are not to let it run away with us and bring us into unseemly quarrels. There is a remedy at hand which we may use if we wish; namely, the law of the land. Let the judge deal with the offender. If we put our fist into the face of the man who gives us a blow, we assume for the time the function of the judge whose duty it is to punish infractions of peace. Instead of hotly

resisting, patiently bear the insult. "Resistance encourages; gentleness which is prepared to endure everything disarms the opponent." Christ himself illustrated this law. He did not personally resist evil. Personally when he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not. "The second example exhibits the intention of the antagonist to proceed by law against his neighbor, so that because of pretended debt he may seize his under garment. But rather than it should become a question of law, a disciple of Jesus should give more than he could hope to win through a defense at law, even to the precious and indispensable cloak. A law plea might be gained, but that would be to make the embittered adversary doubly an enemy. Through the sacrifice of both garments it is possible to win a heart which is conquered by the force of such love." In other words the Christian is not to be litigious, but be willing to suffer unjustly. As a matter of fact those who are quickly sensitive to any infringement of their rights are liable to become contentious. They exaggerate minor offenses against themselves into causes for retaliation. They become known for their fighting propensities. It were far better to forego a temporary vindication and redress in order to win the good will of our opponent later on. I said that Christ did not resist evil, but the Scriptures declare that he will come in judgment against those who have used him ill. Christ has been vindicated and he has accomplished it by waiting — non-resistance. He will also in the end of all things give attention to the wrongs done him. By his meekness he will inherit the world. Meekness in the last analysis always carries the day. The non-resisting man seems for the time weak. In the presence of the pugnacious, self-asserting man he seems to sink into effeminacy; but when fighting is all over and the blusterer has departed, the sweet temper and kindly forgiving spirit of the meek

man breathes forth a calmness and peace that are refreshing and restful and create a suitable atmosphere in which to live. We do not yet know what power for good the non-resistant might have in the world, simply because this law of Christ is not practiced. Few believe in it. The retaliating spirit rules human life. It is "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" now, as it was in Old Testament times. We are afraid to try non-resistance lest it prove too costly an experiment. And yet what an immense deal of good would result if we could only learn this law! How many quarrels would be prevented because one party simply refuses to strive! How many cases in our courts of law would be withdrawn if either party would practice non-retaliation! and it would require only a little self-restraint, a little sacrifice of personal pride. How many feuds of long standing between two people or families would end if either party had a little Christian meekness! But no; we keep up the contention, imagining there is a principle somewhere underneath it all. Curious, indeed, that both parties in the quarrel should claim the principle of right as the reason for their diametrically opposite lines of conduct.

If we are not quite positive as to the meaning of these words of Christ, suppose we put them into practice and get the light of experience on them. Experiment will show whether there is any virtue in non-resistance or whether it has an influence among men or whether it really gains as much as contention for one's rights would.

IV. *Christ taught the duty of benevolence.* "Give to every one that asketh thee." Of course we are not to take this literally. We are not to give an axe to a maniac who pleads for it or money to a man who will go into the next saloon and spend it for drink. The father is not to grant every appeal made to him by his child. Christ himself did not give to every one what he asked. He

did not make those tabernacles on the mount when Peter asked it, neither did he call down fire upon the unhospitable cities because John asked it. Neither did he answer Pilate's question, "What is truth?" If you want to find the meaning in these sweet words, you can easily do so. Do not try to discover it in the letter. Whenever you are clement, sympathetic, large-hearted, open-handed, you are going in the direction of the meaning of this passage. We are to be liberal toward the requests our fellow men make of us. They will ask for our time, money, advice, influence, and all these we are to hold at their disposal. "To every one that asketh." Do not confine your benevolence to a few causes. Do not ride missionary hobbies. "To every one" is the scope of our charity. Let us be ready to give something of ourselves to every good cause. If not dollars, then sympathetic hearing; if not our influence, then give our time. If we are not able to give advice, we may yet give our influence to win that of some one who is able. We are to regard ourselves as storehouses to which needy souls and needy causes may come and be helped.

We cannot study this sermon without feeling the breath from heaven. As its truths march by us in review we understand somewhat the might and majesty of a kingdom of righteousness. We catch glimpses of the glory of this earth when it shall have incorporated into its life the principles herein proclaimed. The ideal of conduct here raised compels us to seek aid from our heavenly Father. He who imagines he can easily put into practice the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount will find as he attempts to do so that he is trying to move mountains. Only God who ordained those great principles of righteousness can give the moral power to put them into life. But that power is a gift for the asking.

Edward Sampson Tead.

OPPOSITION TO CHRIST.

MARK 3: 22–35.

"And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils casteth he out the devils," etc.

MATTHEW gives us, as Mark does not, the immediate occasion of this charge. Jesus had just wrought a remarkable cure of a demoniac, who was also, either from other causes or as a result of this affliction, both blind and dumb. He was cured of all his troubles, his will was once more his own, and he both spoke and saw. It was not strange that the common people wondered and admired, or that the enemies of Jesus should have felt it necessary to offer some accounting for the miracle which should not imply that his power was from God.

The miracles of Jesus were the greatest annoyance to those who were unwilling to believe on him. His teachings they could meet with assertions or denials of their own, but these signs of a divine energy were harder to overcome in their effect upon the multitudes, who were asking the question on every hand: "What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." They did not deny these mighty works; they could not; for they were evident to all. They found fault with some of them because they were wrought on the Sabbath day. They complained of others because they affected their possessions or their occupation, as the blighting of the barren fig tree and the destruction of the herd of swine. And now they accuse him, not for the first time, of being an agent of the devil and not, as he claimed to be, a messenger of God.

This special name Beelzebub is found only once in the Old Testament. He was the god of Ekron to whom King Ahaziah would have sent to inquire as to the result of his injury when he fell out of the window in Samaria. Beelzebub was a local heathen deity, the god of flies, and as the demons were identified by the Jews with the false gods of the heathen, he was taken by them, perhaps on account of his very insignificance, to stand for the prince of the devils, or rather demons; for the Bible recognizes but one devil, while there are many demons or evil spirits who are subject to his control.

This is distinctly the accusation of the scribes from Jerusalem, that by the aid of the devil Jesus had power over the demons: his work was diabolic rather than divine. It was a contemptuous fling by which they sought to undermine his influence with the people.

How did Jesus answer it?

I. *By showing the absurdity of their charge.* He answers them by stating the general principle that any kingdom, family, or individual whose interests are not one, which antagonizes itself, can only come to grief. The devil is no fool; he would be the last one to drive out his servants from their occupancy of the town of Mansoul; he would not work for his own defeat; no earthly king would do this; far less the astute and wily prince of demons. If he did so, the end of his dominion were at hand. "If Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end."

Nay, further than this, says Jesus; these miracles by which the evil spirits are driven out are the sure proof that Beelzebub has found a master. Satan has encountered one stronger than himself; he has already been bound, and now his victor is doing what he will with the house thus formerly occupied and with the goods which it contained. Even now that is true which he declared

later, on the return of the seventy: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven."

These parabolic answers of the Master were addressed to meet the charge that had been made, to show by illustration rather than by argument their falsity and their folly.

They were full of the common sense, that most rare quality, which marked every word of the Master's teaching and conversation. They seem to leave no ground for his enemies to stand upon, no chance for a repetition of the charge.

We may widen the application of his defense. If it is true that Satan's kingdom is never against itself, how much more true it ought to be of the kingdom of the Prince of Peace! Alas for the divisions and the rivalries among those who bear his name! John, the beloved apostle, forbade one to cast out devils, because he did not belong to the circle of those who were the personal attendants of Jesus. The Lord rebuked the spirit he had shown and said: "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us." And still the followers of the youthful, not of the older, John, go about forbidding this one and that other to do the Master's work, because they do not agree in some matter of doctrine or of communion or of practice. Peter and Paul hold each other in abeyance because one is more charitable than the other toward the heathen who are seeking Jesus: one sees only one door of entrance for them, and the other, two. Even in our day questions which the Master never settled for us, and about cases which we will never meet, — for example, what the Lord will do with those to whom his disciples have failed to get his gospel, what were the contents of the original sacred writings which have never got to us, and many

others, — are suffered to divide those who love the Lord Jesus from their brethren.

The Church of God may learn something from the kingdom of the devil; may surely inquire into the application to itself of the Master's words: "If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."

II. *The second answer which Jesus makes is by showing the wickedness of this charge. For it is allied to the unpardonable sin.*

This name has been a source of great perplexity and disquiet certainly in these later centuries, if not ever since the words were first uttered. It has been a mystery which in its vagueness has seized upon those of tender or of morbid consciences and has ridden them like a malignant fiend. It has driven or followed hundreds to the lunatic asylums, and the sad and hopeless plaint, "I have committed the unpardonable sin" has been heard by medical and by spiritual advisers over and over again. The only thought has been, "There is a sin which is unpardonable and I am burdened with such a sense of sin that it must be that I have done that awful thing, whatever it may be, which hath never forgiveness." Perhaps if we can define the nature of this worst offense, some soul in danger of fancying itself to be in this sad estate may be relieved and turn to Him who has power to forgive sins.

It seems to be first of all a sin which finds its expression in words; a sin of the lips. To blaspheme is by its derivation to speak that which is first stupid and then harmful or evil. It is in modern usage almost entirely confined to evil or calumnious speaking against God. Here it is limited to such irreverent and opprobrious utterances against God as manifested in the Holy Spirit.

Connecting the expression "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" with that which had just been said by these

scribes from Jerusalem, the special nature of this sin is made quite clear. Jesus had wrought works of divine power; not by his own inherent might, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, which it is asserted was given to him without measure, and for which at times he prayed. The blasphemy of the scribes was in the way of contemptuous denial of this divine power. It was not done in simplicity, but against all evidence and with contempt and scorn. They sought to bring him into disrepute and to talk down the effect of what all must confess he really did accomplish.

Of course their blasphemous denial of divine and spiritual power was only the utterance of their impious thoughts — and yet we are everywhere taught that wicked thoughts are more harmful and more wicked when they find expression either in word or deed. The sin is in the heart, but the overt act does harm to others and there is a special woe denounced on those who having evil beliefs teach them to other men.

"Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit may be defined to be the sin which a man commits when he rejects the undoubted revelation of the Holy Spirit, and that not merely with a contemptuous moral indifference, but with the evil will struggling to shut out the light of that revelation. It even goes the length of expressing in hostile language his deliberate and conscious opposition to this divine principle." — *Meyer* on Matt. 12:31.

But why is this of all sins the only one which is not to be forgiven? We answer, Because it represents a state of mind so hostile to divine truth and power that it cannot become a willing subject to either. It is not forgiven, because the hardened condition which it manifests makes it impossible for it to yield to the gracious influences of the Spirit toward which it has only conscious and avowed hatred. "The simple impossibility of forgiveness is first

to be sought in the man's own state of heart, which has become one of extreme hostility to God." It is an eternal sin, continually repeated and so forever defying pardon. Neither in this life, where the issues of the future life are fixed, nor in the life to come, where they are declared, can such a state of heart, so defiant and so persistent, find a place for pardon.

No one need ever fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin if he cares whether he has or not. No one who recognizes the mission of the divine Saviour, or the presence of God's Spirit in the world, need trouble himself about this saddest of all offenses — only he who openly and defiantly denies the spiritual effects of the Spirit's working and denounces those who reverently recognize them can come into this condemnation. No one who feels himself in this life under the burden and curse of the unpardonable sin can be in that state of mind which leads to such blasphemy. Thank God that we need not have this possibility hang over us as a fearful mystery! We repeat it: *no one need ever fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin if he cares whether he has or not.*

III. *The third section of this Scripture brings up the lighter offense of those of the very household of Jesus.*

His mother and his brethren come to seek him; they were probably among the number of his friends who said, "He is beside himself," and who laid hold on him to restrain him. They had heard of his strange life, and of the multitudes who thronged his footsteps. He himself, they thought, was carried away by the excitement. If they could withdraw him from it all and keep him quiet for a time, his brain might be restored to its balance. They may have thought him crazier than ever when his answer was made known to them. He is summoned from his work, healing and teaching, in the sacred name of his mother; his brethren too joining in the call.

Never was there a more loving son than Jesus was to Mary, her heart wondering at what he was to be and do; her motherliness full of anxiety as to the effect of this life, crowded with intensest activities, upon her Son. Yet Jesus could turn from his mother's call, when it would draw him from being about his Father's business. So he will not suffer her to interfere at Cana, when she calls his attention to the scarcity which he perhaps had told her privately he was to supplement. And here, he who even amid the racking agonies of the cross commits her to the most loving of the disciples and the one most like himself, will not heed her call, but, now no longer the son of Joseph the carpenter, declares himself the Son of God and all that do his Father's will his nearest kin.

His bitterest enemies are they who deny not him but the divine Spirit who works through him. His nearest friends are they who do not his will but the will of God. How evident it is that Jesus the incarnate Son of God came not to seek subjects for his kingdom, but only to lead men through the working of the Spirit to the Father's love and likeness! In that if we find him, it will be as our Brother, Saviour, Friend.

George M. Boynton.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO JOHN.

LUKE 7 : 24–35.

"And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to say unto the multitudes concerning John," etc.

INASMUCH as Jesus early in his ministry had been recognized and publicly proclaimed by John the Baptist as the expected Messiah, there was danger that some who heard the message of inquiry sent by John from his prison at Machærus to Jesus, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" would receive an unfavorable impression in regard to John's constancy of mind and strength of character. This message implied doubt and vacillation of opinion, where it might have been thought he ought to be sure. They might have judged him, therefore, fickle and unstable, and concluded that his work as a preacher and witness for Christ was of little value.

To obviate this unfavorable impression, Jesus makes haste, as soon as the messengers of John were gone and while they were scarcely out of sight and hearing, to bear emphatic *testimony to the excellence of his character and work.*

I. *Christ's testimony concerning John's character.* In it three things are affirmed of John: (1) He had a firm and stedfast mind; (2) he surpassed any of the prophets; (3) he was a man of the highest greatness. Let us briefly consider each of these affirmations: —

(1) John had a stedfast mind. He was not, therefore, a person to be easily turned from his opinion, or from his course when once deliberately adopted.

He was not a "reed shaken with the wind," nor "a man

clothed in soft raiment," like a courtier, doting upon delicate living and gorgeous apparel, and willing for the sake of these to sell his conscience and his manhood rather than endure privation and hardship. His history had proved this true. His ministry had required that he should summon men to repent. He had not hesitated to do this, whatever might be the position of the sinner. With impartial fidelity and great plainness of speech he had summoned alike the despised publican, the lawless soldier, the self-righteous Pharisee, and the adulterous king to put away their sins and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. To do this must have demanded an intrepid spirit and great firmness of mind and superiority to the common infirmities of men. Had a desire for popularity or for the favor of the great swayed him, or had he desired to live in luxury and splendor, to wear soft raiment and a gold chain, he would have been tempted to employ a courtier's sycophancy to obtain them. The gold chain might have been a fetter to his freedom and honesty of speech. But his loyalty to God had kept him true to his duty. His heart was not corrupted as Balaam's had been by a desire to win the king's favor and enticing gifts. He did not sacrifice his independence of spirit and his boldness in rebuking sin to considerations of worldly comfort and vain display.

In this firm course John was no doubt assisted by his simple tastes and plain habits of living. A man whose wants are few and easily satisfied is shielded from great temptations. John's contentment, therefore, with his coarse camel's hair raiment and leathern girdle, and his satisfaction with his wilderness fare of locusts and wild honey, had been a protection to his integrity. It were well for us all did we heed this lesson. Simplicity of taste and plain living are a means of freedom; while luxury and splendor, a fondness for delicate fare and rich,

expensive things to eat and wear and furnish the house, are obtained often at a tremendous cost — of slavery and a tarnished name.

But notwithstanding all this, John's constancy of mind had apparently given way and he had questioned the truth of Christ's Messiahship, to which he had once borne confident witness, and of which he should have had no doubt. How did this happen? The heart which had proved strong enough to resist Herod's cajolery and bribes had not been able to resist his tyranny. Imprisonment, hunger, torture, and the nameless terrors that may be used by a cruel and irresistible power to wreak its vengeance and secure its end can break down the stoutest heart when flattery and corruption have attempted it in vain. Thus it had happened with Elijah, whose *alter ego* John was; and thus has it repeatedly happened to noble and true-hearted confessors of Christ in different ages. "Heart of oak," says Thomas Fuller, speaking of the Marian martyrs, "hath sometimes warped a little in the scorching heat of persecution. . . . Many censure them for surrendering their forts after a long siege, who would have yielded up their own at the first summons. Oh! there is more required to make one valiant than to call Cranmer and Jewell cowards; as if the fire in Smithfield had been no hotter than what is painted in the Book of Martyrs."

(2) John surpassed any of the prophets. It was foretold of him, "Thou . . . shalt be called the prophet of the Highest," and the people who flocked to the wilderness of Jordan to hear him believed him to be a prophet. But he was not only a true prophet as they believed — he was more. A prophet foretells from afar. Thus did the prophets of the Old Testament, from Moses to Malachi, as they spake with growing clearness of the coming Messiah. But it was John's distinction not only to

foretell his coming with still greater clearness, but to announce his actual arrival, to *usher in* the expected King and proclaim him to those waiting to receive him.

It was John's distinction, also, to prepare the way before him, as a messenger sent before a king in his royal progress prepares the way for his coming and ensures his proper reception. "This is he," says Christ, "of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

The Scripture quoted is a free translation of Mal. 3 : 1. In the original it is the coming of Jehovah himself that is spoken of, and the language is: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." The change of pronouns, of "me" to "thee," is significant. "It is a most conclusive proof of the divinity of Christ," says Bengel, "that much is said of Christ in the New Testament which is simply repeated from the Old Testament, and is there attributed exclusively to God." John, in heralding the coming of Christ, then, heralded the coming of God to the earth and the setting up of his kingdom in it. He prepared the way before him, and the people to receive him, by preaching, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." His glory among the prophets was like that of Hesperus among the stars, which is not only brighter than the other stars that have shone through the night, but it brings the morning and leads in the sun prophesied by them.

(3) John was a man of the highest greatness. "I say unto you," says Christ, "Among them that are born of woman there is none greater than John." These words declare not only that John was unsurpassed by any of the prophets — by Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah — but that he was unsurpassed by any human being that ever had been born He stood upon the very pinnacle of greatness. Not David nor Solomon, not Alexander, Herod, Julius

Cæsar, nor any other man whom the world had called "Great," stood higher than he. Though so poor that he had to put up with the coarsest fare and the plainest and cheapest raiment, though without palace, army, revenue, or kingdom; though defenseless against oppression, persecuted and imprisoned and destined to be slain to gratify a bad woman's hate, still he was great according to the declaration of One whose words none of us will gainsay, and whose judgment is supreme authority. What does this mean? It means, of course, that Christ's standard of greatness is a different one from that commonly held in the world; that it is a moral rather than a material or secular one, suitable to that heavenly kingdom which he came to establish and for which John prepared the way, rather than the one previously employed and still mainly used by mankind. Being such, Christ's standard of greatness is determined by the virtues a man exhibits rather than by the power he wields; by the service he renders to mankind rather than by his splendid achievements in war or government, by which mankind are usually sufferers. John was great in self-denial, in humility, and in devotion to God; great in moral courage to oppose and rebuke sin; great in the qualities of personal righteousness; great in beneficent effort to ameliorate the condition of the world.

This is a greatness of heart rather than of head or hand. In achieving it the chief enemy to be overcome is selfishness. Love is its great motive and weapon. To promote it, to incite men to labor for it, to furnish them with motives to it, and an example, was the purpose for which Christ came into the world.

The moral greatness of John was all the more remarkable and impressive because achieved under conditions much inferior to those men now enjoy under the Christian dispensation. "He that is but little in the kingdom of God," said Christ, "is greater than he." "Greater"

in what respect? Not in actual attainments of virtue and holiness, but in privilege and the conditions favorable to growth in virtue. John did not know and have, to enjoy, what even babes in Christ now have. We have his presence and fellowship, the revelation by him of God's love and grace as our heavenly Father, the benefit of Christ's atonement, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, etc. These Christian doctrines form a great magazine of spiritual power. The motives to be derived from them are the strongest and most potent known to man. Stimulated, inspired, and strengthened by them, men rise to greater heights of moral excellence and perform more heroic achievements than would otherwise be reached by them. The best things and the most difficult things are wrought under their impulse. The Christian faith develops qualities by which alone these things are possible. The unselfishness and large-hearted benevolence required to plan and originate them, the stedfast faith, and unfaltering devotion to a high purpose, and the sublime courage necessary to carry them to a successful accomplishment — these conditions of their achievement are the product of Christian motives. "Christianity," as Carey the missionary said, "teaches its disciples to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." To a worldly mind those things may and often do appear to be chimerical and absurd, and the people who undertake them quite crazy.

The modern missionary going forth to Christianize the heathen world is a good example of all this. With what derision worldly men have spoken and still speak of his project! But they see not as he sees. He sees success where they foresee nothing but utter failure. The poet's words are true of him: —

> Thine was the prophet's vision, thine
> The exultation, the divine
> Insanity of noble minds,

That never falters nor abates,
But labors and endures and waits,
Till all that it foresees it finds,
Or what it cannot find creates.

John's ministry seemed doubtless to many a failure. The Pharisees and the doctors of the law had not accepted his teaching; Herod's brief favor and hollow flatteries had changed to deadly hostility, and the spirit of John, broken by the rigorous treatment he received and by hope deferred, had become a prey to miserable doubt. Only the common people and the publicans had been affected by his ministry — an insignificant following, incapable of protecting him from the tyrant's power or of winning for him the countenance of the Jewish leaders. Was not his work then worthless? Luke says, No, and alleges two things concerning it that vindicate its value: —

(1) His preaching was attended with conversions, and when heeded was a means of fulfilling God's merciful purpose. "All the people when they heard," says Luke, "and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." They "justified" him in the sense of acknowledging him to be just in his requirement of repentance which John had preached, and in imposing upon them his baptism, to signify their purification from sin and their entrance upon the new and holy life befitting the kingdom of God which was at hand. (2) Those who had rejected John's preaching and baptism had simply frustrated God's good purpose in their behalf. "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God." If they had received and acted upon the teaching of his Messenger, they would have been blessed. Their rejection of it and the counsel of God conveyed in it had convicted them of hardness of heart and perversity, but had not proved John's work worthless.

This judgment of the Evangelist in regard to John's work is confirmed by the testimony of Christ concerning it. This includes two things. Christ says, in effect, that: —

I. *Those who had rejected John were like those who rejected himself and his teaching, and they resembled captious children whom nothing will please.* As such children exhibit their ill humor and perversity by sulkily refusing to play with their companions, no matter what the play proposed, be it a wedding or a funeral, so the men of that generation had resisted alike the religious appeal of John and of Jesus. In each a different religious type was presented: one singularly austere, such as the Pharisees affected, and one sociable and winsome. But neither had been accepted; both had been found fault with and perversely misrepresented. They said of John, because of his singularity: "He hath a devil," and of Jesus, because of his sociability and winsome kindness to all: "Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

That John had been rejected of such men was no condemnation of his ministry or evidence of failure. The condemnation of such men is praise, and their dislike is proof of worth.

II. *Whatever be the religious type presented, strict and austere or genial and winsome, "wisdom is justified of all her children."* Christ does not pronounce in favor exclusively of either type. His words seem to imply that each may have its place. There are times when one and times when the other is called for. Wisdom may be arrayed in the garb of either, and the adherents of both may be her children. She is justified, however, of all.

Good people, whatever their type of piety, exalt religion. Each type can point to its true saints, and these, wherever found, commend the piety that made them so.

Be this austere or genial, it has its root in the fear of God, the desire of holiness, and the benevolent love of mankind — the essentials of religion. Where these are found and manifest themselves in noble, unselfish character and a beautiful life, it matters little what dress their possessor wears, or what diet he chooses, or even what mode of worship he prefers. Moses or David, Elijah or Elisha, John the Baptist or John the Evangelist, Puritan or Churchman, Quaker or Methodist; each and all show religion to be the mother of their peace and joy, and vindicate its claim to be heavenly wisdom. Christ's testimony concerning John suggests two practical reflections: —

1. We should endeavor to profit from our favorable situation under the gospel. It has brought the kingdom of God to us, and it makes us citizens of that kingdom. Do we show this by placing our hearts under its motives and living habitually under their sway? Are they shaping our characters and ruling our conduct? It is an unspeakable loss not to feel the impulse of the highest motives, or to be content with low motives when the highest are offered as incentives. It is to fag and often fail, and be destitute of joy when it is given us to rejoice in a conquering strength, and to prevail.

2. Since it is the essentials of religion that give it value, and by these that it is justified, we should magnify them rather than less important features. Not the uniform and accouterments, but the loyal heart willing to lay down its life for country's sake, and unflinching courage before the enemy, and brave deeds make a good soldier. The uniform is of value; it indicates the side to which he belongs and the division and the regiment; but if those soldierly qualities be lacking, it covers a poltroon.

Albert H. Currier.

CHRIST TEACHING BY PARABLES.

LUKE 8:4–15.

"And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a parable," etc.

THE truth of this passage is summed up in the last verse: "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience."

The other hearers described had received the truth, in a degree, but did not "hold it fast"; that is the chief lesson of the parable. The Saviour illustrates the working together of the human and divine elements in religion. Only God can make a seed which contains the principle of life; only he can send shower and sun with their fructifying force. Yet the soul has something to do in securing a harvest; it is responsible for the quality of ground which it offers for the influence of the divine Spirit.

The wayside soil, where the seed lies on the hard surface and is caught away by the birds, represents, according to the Saviour's interpretation, those who hear but do not understand, do not have a spiritual apprehension of it; but for this they are responsible. It is in their power to see the truth, to receive it with the aid which grace offers; they are unwilling: that is their lack.

The soil filled with thorns which choke the seed represents those whose hearts are crowded with worldly care and ambition; but they are responsible for this. It is in their power to get rid of such hindrance and make good ground, but they are unwilling because they love the thorns: that is their lack.

The thin soil on the rock where the seed, having little earth to strike into, is scorched by the sun and withers away represents those who listen to the truth, are in some degree responsive to it, but have not the quality of mind and heart which makes it abide in them; but they are responsible for this. It is in their power to make root and live; for some reason they are unwilling: that is their lack.

The good and honest soil represents those who are willing, who choose the truth and hold it fast.

The Saviour's exhortation, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," intimates that any one may hear in a way to secure eternal life. We can think of certain elements of character which go to fix an assurance of faith:—

I. *Prayer makes root.*

Root depends upon life and life upon prayer. So it is possible by breathing in the divine Spirit to deepen the earth, that the seed may strike down and hold fast. Any one, therefore, ambitious for spiritual strength needs to commence here. If he asks, How may I obtain the mind to pray, answers are suggested in the Scriptures. Ask, "Lord, teach us to pray," and there will come, in the measure of your earnestness, "the spirit of grace and of supplication." Then the very exercise will help you, as we learn to breathe by breathing. Be sure therefore to have your times of devotion; not when it is convenient, not when you feel like it, but as a vital part of your religion, as regularly as you have times for feeding the body. Pray fervently, "without ceasing," and through this channel God will give you eternal life.

II. *Knowledge makes root.*

In all lines of right endeavor success comes, other things being equal, with intelligence. The more any one knows, the better is his qualification for the particular work in hand. If he wants to be a farmer on a high

plane, he is not content to understand the more evident facts of such vocation; he studies principles, avails himself of agricultural clubs or other helps, that he may know everything on the subject which experience has discovered. If he wants to devote himself to some scientific pursuit, he puts himself in training for this; he masters mathematics, that on all sides he may be thoroughly furnished for his profession. Merchants say that the boy who is of most use to them and who therefore has the best promise of promotion is the one who is not satisfied to know about the little things which he is required to do, but is ambitious, so far as possible, to understand the whole business. A biographer of John Jacob Astor writes that the quality which marked him chiefly when he was a young man was the determination to know everything about the establishment in which he was employed, a fur house in New York. When his companions were absorbed in the manifold distractions of the city, he was studying; he learned natural history, chemistry, bookkeeping, mercantile law, till he became indispensable to his employers and laid a sure foundation for his large career.

In all such ways, we say, knowledge is power; and the same is true in religion, as the Scriptures are careful to remind us: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment." The strongest, steadiest Christian is he who is best acquainted with the truth. The question is common, Why is it that young Christians who have a high standard in most things are content to be so ignorant about the Bible; that they devote so little time to their Sunday-school lessons; that they do not have the same ambition to learn these thoroughly which they manifest in the studies of the day school? But this lack does not concern the young only; when all Christians shall

get a spirit of enthusiasm for Bible study, such as they have in the pursuit of other knowledge, there will be great gain in the permanence of Christian character. "Search the Scriptures," as your daily food, and through them God will give you eternal life.

III. *Conscience makes root.*

You tell a child that this is the main point in his Christian nurture. He cannot be always under your eye, within your reach; therefore the best thing which you can do for his training is to inspire him with a quick moral sense, so that he becomes a law unto himself in all his temptations. That is the supreme want for everybody; the best safeguard against evil is a tender conscience.

"He's armed without that's innocent within." And this faculty may be kept sensitive if only it is exercised faithfully: not once in a while in a spasm of virtue, but as a habit. If you turn away from its voice to-day, you will hear less distinctly to-morrow, till soon you may be deaf. Grow careless in separating between wrong and right, doing things which are bad or doubtful, neglecting plain duty, and you have begun to wander from the true way. The man whom Pilgrim saw at the house of the Interpreter, shut up in a cage from which he could not escape, explained how he came to such condition: "Once I was a fair and flourishing professor, but I left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit and he is gone."

But no pilgrim need ever have such experience. Follow conscience, enlightened by the truth, and God will through this give you eternal life.

IV. *Will makes root.*

Whatever conscience directs, do it with your might. Count the cost of being Christ's disciple; count the

cost of not following him, the cost of losing peace and life and heaven. Then with the two sides evident, choose; and having made your choice, put your will into it. This is often forgotten; it seems pious to rely wholly on the divine Spirit, to say, "He is almighty; all things are possible to him." No, they are not. Some things he cannot do; he cannot keep you except so far as you use your own will to the utmost; and with most of us such endeavor would find exercise in the more commonplace matters of daily living. We notice often, on the high banks by the railroads or the streams, little trees or bushes set out all the way up; their roots going down into the soil make a strong network which keeps the earth from being blown away by wind or undermined by rain. So character is kept firm against harmful influence by the little roots of principle which strike down here and there. Whatever in yourself hinders spiritual growth and mars your Christian influence, determine that this shall be overcome; it may be a wrong appetite, an irritable temper, a spirit of selfishness; whatever it is, say to yourself, "I am going to master that; if beaten in the fight to-day, I will try harder to-morrow; I will, God helping me, never give up till I have won the victory." So of more positive duty: "There is something which I ought to do, but which for one reason or another I am neglecting; it may be as simple a thing as daily Bible reading, or prayer, in the closet or especially at the family altar. I ought to perform such duty and, God helping me, I will."

If any one thinks that such small matters do not afford occasion for the exercise of his best strength, let him try it. Like conscience, will-power grows with exercise. Sometimes it is said of a young man, "He seems naturally weak; he has good impulses but they do not control him; he does not take hold of anything strongly; he yields easily to wrong influence; he lacks self-poise; he does not know

how in an evil day to set his face like a flint and to stand; in fact, his will is naturally weak." Well, if that is true, he need not be discouraged; he can fortify himself on this side. If his body is weak, he goes into a gymnasium or works at a health lift or takes some other exercise till the change in him is surprising. If his mind is weak at any point, he trains himself there; he reads, studies, thinks, till he has gained the needed power.

So, if it is his will that is defective, that may be remedied if he desires; it is important gain if he realizes his lack, sees the necessity of being on his guard; he may as a habit throw his whole manhood into his will till its growth in strength is manifest, not more to others than to himself. Then such spirit in the smaller issues will give certain stability in greater emergencies which may come, so that trial may be even the road to greater power; as

> Storms but more deeply root the oak
> Whose brawny arms embrace the blast.

Put your will into your Christian endeavor and God will give you eternal life.

These, then, are some of the considerations which show what any Christian may do to ensure his perseverance. If the seed of the kingdom has started in him, he may provide a soil in which it can strike down and lay hold of his deepest life; by prayer, by knowledge, by conscience, by will, he can make root that shall not wither but shall abide forever.

Urging such practical suggestions we do not forget our dependence upon the divine Spirit to enable us to supply these conditions; we recall the apostle's exhortation: "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him." Yet we need also to emphasize the human side of which we have been thinking. It is needful for the encouragement and

confidence of those who are assuming the obligations of a Christian profession. They are not undertaking something vague, problematical, but may rather have a definite, sure expectation of accomplishing their purpose, of enduring to the end. In our church work we long sometimes for the revival spirit which may be prevailing elsewhere; we think of the good impulse it must bring; how in such a warm atmosphere the seed is more likely to germinate; how people are more ready to begin the Christian way. Yet it is a comfort to remember that those who set out in ordinary times may also have some advantage; they lack possibly the fervor, joy, zeal, which an awakening produces; but on the other hand they are in less danger of reaction; starting with simply a clear, determined purpose to follow Christ, they know that this is something which they can keep; feeling varies, but principle lasts. And it is on this ground that we invite those whose convictions are right to act upon them, to stand where they belong, on the side of Christ.

We need faith to believe that such consecration is possible in connection with the ordinary instrumentalities of any Christian church. The prophet's promise was for the kingdom everywhere. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

According to this, according to the Scripture everywhere, not only showers of grace but "dew" can make root, and it is root that makes eternal life.

Theodore J. Holmes.

THE TWELVE SENT FORTH.

MATTHEW 10: 5–16.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth."

IT has been said that the special mission of our age is to reconceive the Christ; that there is something of the simplicity of that divine life which must be again caught and infused into the views of the present; that there is something of the sympathy of Jesus Christ for all men which must once more be reinstated in the experiences of humanity; that Christ has become in some sense a form; that he is to be recovered as a divine faith; that really we will get the largest and the truest view of his divinity and his deity as we appreciate all that he was in the simplicity, sinlessness, and sublimity of his character as he walked among men.

What is true of Christ is, in a measure, true of the apostles. We talk and sing of the "glorious company of the apostles," and somehow we take them out of the ordinary lists of life and seem to consider them as marked men, as men peculiarly endowed, as men placed in the most conspicuous relationships. We need to come back again to the twelve apostles and see them just as they were to realize that "*these* twelve Jesus sent forth."

Sent them forth to what? To speak and to work in his name. But if you had gone into their libraries, you would have seen no parchments there announcing the fact that they had graduated from college or seminary and had been recipients of a degree. There were no universities and seminaries for them! They had no libraries. If you had asked one of them if he had been licensed to

preach, he would have answered: "I don't know what you mean by a license, but Christ sent me and I obeyed."

Remember who they were. They were fishermen, they were publicans, they were tanners — men taken from the ordinary walks in life: not exceptional men in any sense of the word, but men who, because of their sturdy faith, have shaken the world more mightily than any others. They were immature men; they were, in a sense, ignorant men, of small spiritual experience, of limited caliber. They had come up from the fishing boat and the tannery, and had been to school to Jesus Christ a little while; and then because they knew a little something of his love, because one ray of divine life had penetrated their souls, because there was one all-absorbing purpose in their lives, as Jesus looked out upon the needy multitude and saw how sorely they were suffering because of the lack of some word from God, however simple, he turned to these twelve plain men, uneducated, ignorant, but still having learned something about him and his mission, and said, "Go." These twelve common people Jesus sent forth.

They are fairly representative of the life of the world. They represent inability, inadaptability to work. We must not look at them and say, "We are different from these twelve; these twelve Jesus sent forth, but because of our incapacity he does not send us forth." We must look at them and find some relationships which, applying to them, apply to every Christian who would go forth, sent by Jesus Christ to work in his name.

And I suggest, in the first place, that Jesus sent them to a prescribed mission and a limited sphere of work. He said: "Go not in to any way of the Gentiles . . . but . . . to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He knew their limitations; he knew they were unfit to cope with the Samaritans. They were not prepared now to take the gospel out to the Gentiles. By-and-by would be time

enough; now they were immature. Let them go to their restricted mission first, let them prove themselves in the midst of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. By-and-by let them go to the broader field, to the Gentiles and Samaritans. God has given many persons an equipment in virtue by which they might go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but somehow they think they must go to the Samaritans, and to the Gentiles. They think it is better to go to the large thing rather than the obscure thing. They can never find a place large enough to do their duty in!

Here is a blacksmith. What muscles are his! He will fashion the spring of a wagon for you and make it perfect; but give that man with his iron muscle your watch-spring; ask him to mend that: he has gotten out of his place; he is among the Gentiles and Samaritans, he is fitted for the house of Israel. Alas for your watch!

The soul that is willing to acknowledge its immaturity and the earnestness of its desire, long before it has come to be an expert in its appreciation and appropriation of the gospel, is sent because of its earnestness to some obscure and limited task among the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And the ability of that soul to work among the Gentiles and Samaritans hinges upon its willingness to go to the limited task.

There are men in the world, plenty of them, who are great scholars; they are mighty students. They are only students. They make poor professors, they make worse preachers. God has fitted them for a specific place in human life. In that place they are strong. Let them overstep the barriers and try to do something for which God has never trained them, and they are weakness itself. It is the first lesson for the Christian worker to learn that he is not to tarry until he has attained symmetry and proportion in his Christian life; that if only one ray of the

gospel has penetrated his soul, there is some lost sheep in the house of Israel for whom that ray is intended by Jesus Christ. And if he is willing to go to the small and the obscure and the out-of-the-way task, by-and-by he will be ready to go to the Samaritans, by-and-by to the Gentiles, by-and-by to the larger relationships and the heavier responsibilities. These twelve common men Jesus sent forth, and sent them upon a restricted and upon a distinct mission.

Let us notice, in the second place, the equipment that the Master gave them as they went to this mission. "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand . . . cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." "Freely ye received, freely give." They did not know, as I have said, so very much about Christ. Their ideas concerning the kingdom of heaven were very crude. Even in their later lives they thought of the kingdom of heaven as having a great white throne in its center, and one of them wanted to sit on the right hand, and one on the left. It was not that they saw the depth of the truth they had been taught by the Master, but something had come into their lives from his divine life which made them believe that there was a kingdom of heaven, something superior to anything which the world of that day was or hoped to have, which was not only revealed in Jesus Christ but was possessed by Jesus Christ; and because they knew that one thing, because that great strong truth had put its hooks into their souls, Jesus knew he could trust them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and say to them the one thing which had struck into the very depths of their being. He did not leave them with a message simply to preach. That message was to be coupled with the work they were to perform. What is preaching? Is it simply the announcing of some great truth? Preaching that is true and strong and deep

is something other than this. Preaching is truth coupled with personality; it is something that a man believes in his deepest soul so utterly that he is willing to work his belief out in the life to which he goes. Everybody can preach. They had no great congregations, those disciples. I can fancy them going from home to home, healing the sick and saying, "In the name of the Lord Jesus be thou restored to health, but remember that the kingdom of heaven is at hand." I can imagine them touching the lepers whom the people would not nurse, in utter fearlessness — and as they touched them, saying, "In the name of the Lord Jesus be thou healed, and remember that the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The doctrine which they preached came out of their lives. It was truth which had been set on fire by personality. Their lives, not their words, preached for them. If we expect souls to be uplifted as we proclaim truth, we must match the proclamation by a personality which is willing to lose itself in its mission, which is willing to take its place by the side of the humblest, and as it raises these up by the leverage of its influence never forgets its message, "Remember, remember that the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Have you read of the woman who makes it the privilege of her life to go from her beautiful home down to the slums, spreading a feast for men, and then speaking to them about Jesus Christ? Some one said: "It cannot be possible that you do not understand that all these men come for is to get something to eat!" "I know; but I could not talk to them about the love of Christ so long as I knew they were hungry." That is precisely what Christ meant when he said: "Go and preach, but let your preaching always be coupled with some deed of mercy, some act of kindness, something that will illustrate that the truth which you proclaim has hooked itself into your own soul and has become part and parcel of your own life." It is the second

qualification for a Christian worker that he be not only willing to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, but that side by side with his proclamation he will be willing to touch the life that needs the help and strength of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is a third thing which we must notice with relation to these twelve that Jesus sent forth, and that is the *spirit* that was to dominate them. You must not stop to provide for yourselves scrip and purses and shoes, but go immediately. That passage has been to many a stumblingblock. Jesus Christ was availing himself of a maxim that was common in his day, and what he meant to say was this: "As you go preaching the kingdom of heaven is at hand to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as you lean over those who are sick and give them back again the health and strength they have lost, you must reveal to them a spirit that shall make them believe that you consider *people* to be of more value than *purses*, and souls to be of more consequence than shoes. In other words, you must have in your lives a spirit of sacrifice that will be willing to do anything if only the triumph of the gospel of Christ may be assured." It is a great characteristic of the Christian worker that the first thing in his life is the message which he brings to the world: that the shoes and the purses and the staff have their places and their relationships, but that the moment any one of them seizes the center of his soul, at that moment he fails in his equipment for his divine message. At the moment that anything other than his spiritual life and his spiritual opportunity comes into the foreground he is disabled as a soldier of Christ. We need in this day, when we are told that the Church wants those to worship who can afford to attend, to hold up to the world by our own lives, that the world may be convinced by what it sees, the fact that there lives in our souls a spirit which is so

consecrated to Christ who has bought us with his precious blood that everything else must take a secondary place.

You remember that story about the man who was visited once by his minister at his home: "I am not at all impressed by your arguments," said the wanderer; "I think I can answer them satisfactorily, every one. The service of the church does not mean to me very much, but the thing that has power over me is that you, personally, seem to care about my soul, and that it seems to make a great difference to you what is going to become of me." And when that stray parishioner saw the soul of his preacher, and in it the spirit of Christ, when he understood that his soul was worth more to his pastor than anything he could give him, then he was willing to lay down his weapons of rebellion.

When Haley wanted to get an extra price for Uncle Tom he used the faithful slave's religion as a lever. "I know there 's differences in religion — some kinds is miser'ble. There 's your meetin' pious, there 's your singin', roarin' pious: them ar ain't no account, in black or white: but *these* raily is; and I 've seen it in niggers as often as any, your rail, softly quiet, stiddy, honest pious, that the hull world could n't tempt 'em to do nothing that they think is wrong: and ye see in this letter what Tom's old master says about him."

That is the kind of religion which makes its appeal to the world — a religion which has a spirit in it which is not forever filing exceptions to the principles of God but which takes those principles in the intent of the Master, and is never so happy and contented as when, at whatever personal sacrifice, it is conscious that those principles, through it, are being brought into the world.

We notice finally the unrecorded result of Christian effort. It is a curious coincidence that there is no record given of the outcome of that mission of the twelve. No

one knows whether there were a great company who were turned to God or whether that mission was a fruitless one. The only thing we know about it is this: that they went where the Master told them to go, that they preached as the Master told them to preach, and the consequences were unrecorded. The smallest part of your religious work is what we may call distinctly its accomplishment. The real result of it may lie in a very different direction from that in which you look. It may be that those disciples, through the experiences which were theirs, became stronger and more robust in their service for Jesus Christ, and that thus in the thought of their Master their work was accomplished. It is for the disciple of the Master to illustrate, to do the work and then permit the results to be cared for by God. We are learning these days the lesson that the obscure and the unseen forces of life are after all the more potent. We love display. To be conspicuous is a natural longing of most human hearts. There are 78,000 square miles of land down in the Everglade state which have been made by innumerable insects which have given up their lives and left their shells. And the city of Paris — that wonderful city of the world — is to-day founded upon just such a bed of shell. The important thing with relation to your life and mine is the spirit with which that life goes to its toils and to its tasks. Be the outcome of it what the Master wills,— conspicuous in the eyes of men, unseen by your own generation, — remember simply this: that with the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts and this sublime purpose in our lives we go to work and to preach in the limited sphere in which he has placed us. Although the world may never see one influence radiating from our lives, it shall be that by-and-by, when we stand by the side of the great white throne and look back, we shall understand that those lives which seemed to some to be so useless

and so insignificant were really pregnant with accomplishment.

This, then, for Christian workers: a commission from the Master himself, a place for its exercise, a spirit for its effective use, and a carelessness of result, because of the swelling assurance that nothing shall be lost in the doing of God's will.

Nehemiah Boynton.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

ISAIAH 9: 2–7.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," etc.

THIS chapter turns the page of history and opens that of prophecy. The history is one with which we are familiar, for it is the story of our own souls as truly as of Israel. It is the sad narrative of sin and its sorrows — a narrative whose first chapter was written in the fall of the first man, whose last sentences are not yet dry, because they are the recorded experiences of your guilt and of mine. In the eighth chapter the prophet paints Israel as it became because of idolatry. The people forgot God. They sought not him, but familiar spirits and wizards that chirp and mutter. They dishonored the Lord of hosts, and then the hosts of the heathen dishonored them. Disasters from within and without fast multiplied upon them. Darkness wrapped them about, desolation and despair laid heavy hands upon them. In wretchedness "they look unto the earth," but to behold only distress and the gloom of anguish. The eye that looks down never sees the bow of the covenant. That is on the cloud above; on the earth is the shadow of the cloud. Looking down we see the shadow, the withering grass, dying man. The earth gave Israel no hope. Outside her gates hordes of invaders thirsting for her blood; within, the wretchedness of guilt and the foreboding of irretrievable disaster — this was the best she saw. But now prophecy speaks: "They shall turn their faces upward." In despair a remnant of his people will look up to God for

deliverance. Mark the marvelous transformation! The floods were overwhelming them; God was hiding his face from them; darkness and gloom of anguish wrapped them about, and into thick darkness they were being driven away. "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish." "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The upward look sees the bow on the cloud. The upturned eye finds God and meets his look of love. The petition of an uplifted face is always answered by the dawning Light. When our fellow men in this far-off age turned their faces upward to God the night of Hades gave place to the day of heaven. When we pray, the night shade pales and the Day Star rises.

I have read in some old, marvelous tale,
Some legend strange and vague,
That a midnight host of specters pale
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

But when the old cathedral bell
Proclaimed the morning prayer,
The white pavilions rose and fell
On the alarmëd air.

Down the broad valley, fast and far,
The troubled army fled;
Up rose the glorious morning star,
The ghastly host was dead.

I have read in the marvelous heart of man,
That strange and mystic scroll,
That an army of phantoms vast and wan
Beleaguer the human soul.

And when the solemn and deep church bell
Entreats the soul to pray,
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar
The spectral camp is fled;
Faith shineth as a morning star,
Our ghastly fears are dead.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." The very opposite of their darkness has come — the Life which is the light of men.

"A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," and all the blessed consequences which flow from it.

Beginning with verse 3, we may trace the results of the shining of the "great light" upon Israel: —

I. *A prospered nation.* "Multiplied" is a frequent word in Messianic prophecies. When the Messiah comes, Ezekiel says, the land shall be tilled and sown, men multiplied, cities inhabited, waste places builded; the last days shall be the days of fruitfulness and plenty. Every prophet pictures the coming of the Messiah as the beginning of a golden age for the nation, when Israel shall lift up her head and be crowned queen of the earth. The story of Christian states has abundantly demonstrated this. The benediction of God has rested on nations that, hearing of Christ, have accepted him as their Ruler. The Greeks have had no equals in the productions of the chisel, and the Roman legions no superiors in discipline and bravery. Both Greek and Roman, however, were without the Light, and both, therefore, despite laurel-crowned sculptors or victorious eagles, have weakened and fallen, while a little shipload of exiles with neither art nor arms, but with the Christ and his gospel, have overcome savage nature and savage man — the little one has become a thousand and the small one a strong nation, to whose light the nations come and kings to the brightness of her rising. A Christian civilization is the only one that lives. A politician who forgets this and sells

himself to personal or party ends has lifted his hand against his country and his God. Such a man in such an age in such a land as ours is alike unworthy the suffrages of the people and the rights of citizenship.

II. *Joy.* The Messiah will bring the joy of harvest — the joy Isaiah describes later, when "in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things," or like that of the feast ordained under the early law when, "seeking his habitation, the tribes shall eat before the Lord their God, and rejoice in all they put their hand unto, they and their households, wherein the Lord their God hath blessed them." Have you watched by sick beds through the weary night and known what joy the first faint rays of longed-for morning brought? Have you toiled in the darkness, alone and lost, over strange roads, and experienced the gladness of seeing the light come? Have you stood at watch on the deck of a tossing ship, with the wind shrieking through the rigging like voices of the dead, and the waves rushing over the bows like wolves after prey, and felt the strain and horror leave your soul as day and calm came? Have you ever gone out into harvest fields and gathered the ripened grain and mellowed fruits and felt at last the joy of plenty following long days of heat and toil? Then you know something of what Isaiah means. Christ's coming means the joy of plenty, of victory, of safety, of rest. Infidelity makes men weep. God wipes away all tears. Infidelity has never written a song of joy. Christ has given us a book of psalms and countless volumes of praise. Without the Messiah was "distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish"; with him, joy "according to the joy in harvest." Without Christ, there are no earthly circumstances that can make men blessed; with Christ, there are no circumstances that can make men wretched.

III. *Broken yokes.* Assyria is doomed when Christ is born. The yoke which burdens the people, the staff by which they are beaten, the rod of the taskmaster by which they are driven to their toil — all are to be broken and powerless. As Gideon with his handful defeated and crushed the Midian oppressors, the Assyrian shall be overcome and scattered by him who is to come. Bunyan's Pilgrim toiled on for weary days and miles, unable by any effort or device to free himself from the burden that op pressed him, but when he came before the cross the cords snapped, the burden rolled forever from his shoulders and was lost in the valley below. One was to come to them, One has come to us, who breaks all yokes and relieves from all burdens. In his presence all enemies tremble, all foes are defeated. Before his glorious cross all men are free. He gently says: "Take my yoke upon you." There is not room on the same neck for Christ's yoke and the oppressor's burden. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. Taking up that yoke, we throw off all others and find rest unto our souls. The nation or the soul in captivity to Christ has broken all other fetters. Slavery for body or soul ends when Christ's reign begins.

IV. *No more war.* War entails the miseries from which Israel suffers. Until war ends no permanent relief can be hoped for. Some battlefields are the birthplaces of liberty and peace; most are the burial places of both. The wars Israel wages are prolific sources of poverty and sorrow. The greatest gift, then, of Him who is to come is peace. With what dramatic skill the prophet pictures this! The soldier is returning, flushed with victory, from the field of battle. He strides on in conscious pride and strength, his great boots studded with nails, his red cloak crimsoned, his weapons stained with the blood of the slain, when suddenly the emblems of his victory are snatched from him and the spoils and garments and

weapons in which he glories are made fuel for the flames. His occupation is gone. Coins of Vespasian and Domitian exist on which Peace is represented as kindling with a torch a heap of the implements of war. It was reserved for Christ to fulfill this prophecy. In the year 404, when the Romans were celebrating victory by a gladiatorial combat, at the very instant when with drawn swords the combatants were about to rush upon each other, Telemachus, a monk, threw himself between them, crying: "The gladiators shall not fight! Are you going to thank God by shedding innocent blood?" His answer was a shower of stones from the enraged spectators, the very gladiators themselves, it is said, running him through with their swords. Yet, though martyred, he accomplished his end and the gladiatorial combat was no more. Thus has Christianity flung itself between the spear-points of enraged and struggling men, and inaugurated the reign of peace. Before Christ, war was the principal occupation of men, and the spoils of battle their chief glory. Since Christ, war is becoming the last employment of the human race and its honors the emptiest men wear. Not Plato nor Aristotle, but Christ has taught the world the idea of humanity and the brotherhood of men.

The prophet now emphasizes more distinctly the direct cause of these blessings. "*For* unto us a child is born." This Child is the one source of peace, of freedom, of joy, of political salvation. The generations of men were exhausted. Something men could not produce, something from Jehovah must come to bring about the release and its train of blessings. "Unto us a Son is given." Through him alone "the great light" comes. In the glorification of Christ which follows no mention is made of his origin. In the galaxy of his glorious attributes the prophet loses sight of all else. Character is more important than ancestry. It is enough for Isaiah that in

Him the people are to find release from their distresses; what he does is to him the most joyful of all themes. Upon his shoulder shall be the government. It was an Oriental custom for one in authority to carry the key upon his shoulder. No visible sign of authority would Christ exhibit. His would be not the authority of outward emblem, but the higher authority of right to rule. Not over Israel alone is he to rule. The phrase denotes world-wide authority. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The names given him by Isaiah at once differentiate the Messiah from all earthly rulers.

He is the *Wonder-counselor.* It is characteristic of Isaiah's prophecies that he ascribes to the Messiah unparalleled wisdom in counsel. He lifts him immeasurably above all rulers in the marvelous wisdom with which he directs his people. Neither disaster nor failure can be possible to those who follow his counsel. He makes no mistakes, is guilty of no errors, and thus will overcome the chieftains of the enemy, the wisest of whom oft-times err in judgment.

He is the *Mighty God.* The word Isaiah here uses for God always means, in his prophecy, absolute divinity. While not speaking in the fullness of the New Testament sense of the divinity of Christ, by this great title he places the Deliverer above all earthly kings, seeing in him a representation of divinity which makes him not only greater but different in kind from all earthly rulers.

Everlasting Father. The blessings he brings are to be permanent. There is to be no degeneracy in his government. The light which he brings will not fade into evening shadows. His attributes of wisdom and glory are everlasting. What he does to-day he will be able to do to-morrow and through endless years. The Messiah will not cease.

The Prince of Peace. This contrasts him with Ahaz,

the prince of war, and may well contrast him with all princes of all ages. The ideals of royalty have usually been those of the camp and the court — glory in war, splendor in peace. The ideals of the Prince of the house of David are those of peace and simplicity. He comes to establish a kingdom, but with no army at his back and no sword at his side. The scepter he uplifts brings peace to the nations. Under his reign

> The war drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags are furled
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

The glorious beginning of his government is but a hint of its future. In its splendor the glory of all earthly kingdoms is to be absorbed, as stars are lost in the sun, and of its increase and peace there is to be no end. A few years will write the story of Assyria; eternity alone will compass the reign of the Messiah. Of all this splendid prophecy, the last words, perhaps, mean most to Israel. Judgment and righteousness are to be the laws of his kingdom. Cruelly oppressed, honest judgment a thing unknown, and righteousness laughed to scorn, a kingdom in which oppression is unknown and righteousness the law is to them the paradise of God. One has come who will right all things at last, and give this misgoverned world songs for sighing. It is still the Assyrian against Christ: but Christ is to win. Already has he done wondrous things for the slave, the poor, the sorrowing. The future of his reign will far eclipse its past. Isaiah's prophecy was in sharp contradiction to all contemporaneous history, yet he had faith in its fulfillment. With centuries of its progressive fulfillment behind us, we can well afford to trust with joy in the promise of the complete coronation of Jesus and the universal sway of Judgment and Righteousness. Not alone can we afford to trust, but with unquestioning

confidence and consuming zeal to point weary, burdened, sinning souls to him at whose feet all pursuing waves are stayed, on whose breast all aching hearts find rest, in whose blood all guilt is washed away, at whose right hand are pleasures evermore.

John E. Tuttle.

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